A Quarterly of New Literature

ACCENT

THOMAS MANN:
Israel Stands Before Pharaoh

DAVID DAICHES:
Problems for Modern Novelists

WALTER VAN TILBURG CLARK:
The Indian Well

EDWIN BERRY BURGUM:
Kafka and the Bankruptcy of Faith

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS:
Poem for Your Eye, Dante

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EDITORS: Kerker Quinn, Charles Shattuck, Arthur Carr, Marion Carr. (Inactive: W. R. Moses, Kenneth Andrews, W. McNeil Lowry, Robert Bauer, Donald Hill, Helen Hill, John Schacht.)

ASSISTANTS: Earl Oliver, Verne Purcell, Morton Moskov, George Wiswell, Lura Williams, Carl F. Hartman.

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CONTRIBUTORS

EDWIN BERRY BURGUM, editor of *Science and Society* and of the anthology, *The New Criticism,* teaches at New York University.

GRAY BURR, represented here by his first published work, enters active service in the Navy after his graduation from Harvard this spring.

WALTER VAN TILBURG CLARK is best known for his novel, *The Ox-Bow Incident.* His story, "Why Don't You Look Where You're Going?" (*Accent,* Summer 1941) leads off the new anthology, *American Writing 1942,* edited by Alan Swallow.

DAVID DAICHES, who has been teaching at the University of Chicago for several years, will return to England in April to serve in the British Army Education Corps. His most recent book is *Virginia Woolf.*

MORTON FINEMAN is a young Philadelphia writer.

WALLACE FOWLIE, of the French Department at Yale, will soon publish two critical studies, *Heroism and Poetry* and *Grandeur de la pensée francaise.*

PAUL JACOB, author of *Remy de Gourmont,* teaches French at Illinois.

PAUL LANDIS, well known as editor and translator, is in the English Department at Illinois.

THOMAS MANN'S *Joseph the Provider* will appear next autumn. "Israel Stands Before Pharaoh" is taken from this concluding book in the Joseph tetralogy.

ISRAEL NEWMAN is a psychiatrist at the Augusta (Maine) State Hospital.

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS, an English instructor at Notre Dame, is to be included in the 1943 edition of New Directions' *Five Young American Poets.*

NORMAN HOLMES PEARSON, now on leave from Yale to do war work in Washington, is co-editor with W. R. Benét of the *Oxford Anthology of American Literature.*

ANGELINA PIETRANGELI teaches modern languages at Illinois.

HARRY SLOCHOWER is the author of *Thomas Mann's Joseph Story* and *Three Ways of Modern Man.*

HOWARD P. VINCENT is on the English staff at Illinois Institute of Technology.

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ACCENT

A QUARTERLY OF NEW LITERATURE

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WALTER VAN TILBURG CLARK:

The Indian Well

In this dead land the only allegiance was to sun. Even night was not strong enough to resist; earth stretched gratefully when night came, but had no hope that day would not return. Such living things as hoarded a little juice at their cores were secret about it, and only the most ephemeral existences, the air at dawn and sunset, the amethyst shadows in the mountains, had any freedom. The Indian Well alone, of lesser creations, was in constant revolt. Sooner or later all minor breathing rebels came to its stone basin under the spring in the cliff, and from its overflow grew a tiny meadow delta and two columns of willows and aspens, holding a tiny front against the valley. The pictograph of a starving, ancient journey, cut in rock above the basin, a sun-warped shack on the south wing of the canyon, and an abandoned mine above it, were the only tokens of man's participation in the well's cycles, each of which was an epitome of centuries, and perhaps of the wars of the universe.

The day before Jim Suttler came up, in the early spring, to take his part in one cycle, was a busy day. The sun was merely lucid after four days of broken showers, and, under the separate cloud shadows sliding down the mountain and into the valley, the canyon was alive. A rattler emerged partially from a hole in the mound on which the cabin stood, and having gorged in the darkness, rested with his head on a stone. A road-runner, stepping long and always about to sprint, came down the morning side of the mound, and his eye, quick to perceive the difference between the live and the inanimate of the same color, discovered the coffin

shaped head on the stone. At once he broke into a reaching sprint, his neck and tail stretched level, his beak agape with expectation. But his shadow arrived a step before him. The rattler recoiled, his head scarred by the sharp beak but his eye intact. The road-runner said nothing, but peered warily into the hole without stretching his neck, then walked off stiffly, leaning forward again as if about to run. When he had gone twenty feet he turned, balanced for an instant, and charged back, checking abruptly just short of the hole. The snake remained withdrawn. The road-runner paraded briefly before the hole, talking to himself, and then ran angrily up to the spring, where he drank at the overflow, sipping and stretching his neck, lifting his feet one at a time, ready to go into immediate action. The road-runner lived a dangerous and exciting life.

In the upper canyon the cliff swallows, making short harp notes, dipped and shot between the new mud under the aspens and their high community on the forehead of the cliff. Electrical bluebirds appeared to dart the length of the canyon at each low flight, turned up tilting. Lizards made unexpected flights and stops on the rocks, and when they stopped did rapid push-ups, like men exercising on a floor. They were variably pugnacious and timid.

Two of them arrived simultaneously upon a rock below the road-runner. One of them immediately skittered to a rock two feet off, and they faced each other, exercising. A small hawk coming down over the mountain, but shadowless under a cloud, saw the lizards. Having overfled the difficult target, he dropped to the canyon mouth swiftly and banked back into the wind. His trajectory was cleared of swallows, but one of them, fluttering hastily up, dropped a pellet of mud between the lizards. The one who had retreated disappeared. The other flattened for an instant, then sprang and charged. The road-runner was on him as he struck the pellet, and galloped down the canyon in great, tense strides, on his toes, the lizard lashing the air from his beak. The hawk stooped at the road-runner, thought better of it, and rose against the wind to the head of the canyon, where he turned back and coasted over the desert, his shadow a little behind him and farther and farther below.

The swallows became the voice of the canyon again, but in moments when they were all silent, the lovely smaller sounds emerged, their own feathering, the liquid overflow, the snapping and clicking of insects, a touch of wind in the new aspens. Under these lay still more delicate tones, erasing, in the most silent seconds, the difference between eye and ear, a white cloud shadow passing under the water of the well, a dark cloud shadow on the cliff, the aspen patterns on the stones. Silentest of all were the rocks, the lost on the canyon floor, and the strong, thinking cliffs. The swallows began again.

At noon a red and white cow with one new calf, shining and curled, came slowly up from the desert, stopping often to let the calf rest. At each stop the calf would try vigorously to feed, but the cow would go on. When they reached the well the cow drank slowly for a long time; then she con-

tinued to wrinkle the water with her muzzle, drinking a little and blowing, as if she found it hard to leave. The calf worked under her with spasmodic nudgings. When she was done playing with the water, she nosed and licked him out from under her and up to the well. He shied from the surprising coolness and she put him back. When he stayed, she drank again. He put his nose into the water too, and bucked up as if bitten. He returned, got water up his nostrils and took three jumps away. The cow was content and moved off towards the canyon wall, tonguing grass tufts from among the rocks. Against the cliff she rubbed gently and continuously with a mild voluptuous look, occasionally lapping her nose with a serpent tongue. The loose winter shag came off in tufts on the rock. The calf lost her, became panicked and made desperate noises which stopped prematurely, and when he discovered her, complicated her toilet. Finally she led him down to the meadow where, moving slowly, they both fed until he was full and went to sleep in a ball in the sun. At sunset they returned to the well, where the cow drank again and gave him a second lesson. After this they went back into the brush and northward into the dusk. The cow's size and relative immunity to sudden death left an aftermath of peace, rendered gently humorous by the calf.

Also at sunset, there was a resurgence of life among the swallows. The thin golden air at the cliff tops, in which there were now no clouds so that the eastern mountains and the valley were flooded with unbroken light, was full of their cries and quick maneuvres among a dancing myriad of insects. The direct sun gave them, when they perched in rows upon the cliff, a dramatic significance like that of men upon an immensely higher promontory. As dusk rose out of the canyon, while the eastern peaks were still lighted, the swallows gradually became silent. At twilight, the air was full of velvet, swooping bats.

In the night jack-rabbits multiplied spontaneously out of the brush of the valley, drank in the rivulet, their noses and great ears continuously searching the dark, electrical air, and played in fits and starts on the meadow, the many young ones hopping like rubber, or made thumping love among the aspens and the willows.

A coyote came down canyon on his belly and lay in the brush with his nose between his paws. He took a young rabbit in a quiet spring and snap, and went into the brush again to eat it. At the slight rending of his meal the meadow cleared of leaping shadows and lay empty in the starlight. The rabbits, however, encouraged by new-comers, returned soon, and the coyote killed again and went off heavily, the jack's great hind legs dragging.

In the dry-wash below the meadow an old coyote, without family, profited by the second panic, which came over him. He ate what his loose teeth could tear, leaving the open remnant in the sand, drank at the basin and, carefully circling the meadow, disappeared into the dry wilderness.

Shortly before dawn, when the stars had lost lustre and there was no sound in the canyon but the rivulet and the faint, separate clickings of

mice in the gravel, nine antelope in loose file, with three silently flagging fawns, came on trigger toe up the meadow and drank at the well, heads often up, muzzles dripping, broad ears turning. In the meadow they grazed and the fawns nursed. When there was as much gray as darkness in the air, and new wind in the canyon, they departed, the file weaving into the brush, merging into the desert, to nothing, and the swallows resumed the talkative day shift.

Jim Suttler and his burro came up into the meadow a little after noon, very slowly, though there was only a spring-fever warmth. Suttler walked pigeon-toed, like an old climber, but carefully and stiffly, not with the loose walk natural to such a long-legged man. He stopped in the middle of the meadow, took off his old black sombrero, and stared up at the veil of water shining over the edge of the basin.

"We're none too early, Jenny," he said to the burro.

The burro had felt water for miles, but could show no excitement. She stood with her head down and her four legs spread unnaturally, as if to postpone a collapse. Her pack reared higher than Suttler's head, and was hung with casks, pans, canteens, a pick, two shovels, a crowbar, and a rifle in a sheath. Suttler had the cautious uncertainty of his trade. His other burro had died two days before in the mountains east of Beatty, and Jenny and he bore its load.

Suttler shifted his old six-shooter from his rump to his thigh, and studied the well, the meadow, the cabin and the mouth of the mine as if he might choose not to stay. He was not a cinema prospector. If he looked like one of the probably mistaken conceptions of Christ, with his red beard and red hair to his shoulders, it was because he had been away from barbers and without spare water for shaving. He was unlike Christ in some other ways.

"It's kinda run down," he told Jenny, "but we'll take it."

He put his sombrero back on, let his pack fall slowly to the ground, showing the sweat patch in his bleached brown shirt, and began to unload Jenny carefully, like a collector handling rare vases, and put everything into one neat pile.

"Now," he said, "we'll have a drink." His tongue and lips were so swollen that the words were unclear, but he spoke casually, like a club-man sealing a minor deal. One learns to do business slowly with deserts and mountains. He picked up a bucket and started for the well. At the upper edge of the meadow he looked back. Jenny was still standing with her head down and her legs apart. He did not particularly notice her extreme thinness, for he had seen it coming on gradually. He was thinner himself, and tall, and so round-shouldered that when he stood his straightest he seemed to be peering ahead with his chin out.

"Come on, you old fool," he said. "It's off you now."

Jenny came, stumbling in the rocks above the meadow, and stopping often as if to decide why this annoyance recurred. When she became interested, Suttler would not let her get to the basin, but for ten minutes gave

her water from his cupped hands, a few licks at a time. Then he drove her off and she stood in the shade of the canyon wall watching him. He began on his thirst in the same way, a gulp at a time, resting between gulps. After ten gulps he sat on a rock by the spring and looked up at the meadow and the big desert, and might have been considering the courses of the water through his body, but noticed also the antelope tracks in the mud.

After a time he drank another half dozen gulps, gave Jenny half a pail full, and drove her down to the meadow, where he spread a dirty blanket in the striped sun and shadow under the willows. He sat on the edge of the blanket, rolled a cigarette and smoked it while he watched Jenny. When she began to graze with her rump to the canyon, he flicked his cigarette onto the grass, rolled over with his back to the sun and slept until it became chilly after sunset. Then he woke, ate a can of beans, threw the can into the willows and led Jenny up to the well, where they drank together from the basin for a long time. While she resumed her grazing, he took another blanket and his rifle from the pile, removed his heel-worn boots, stood his rifle against a fork, and rolling up in both blankets, slept again.

In the night many rabbits played in the meadow in spite of the strong sweat and tobacco smell of Jim Suttler lying under the willows, but the antelope, when they came in the dead dark before dawn, were nervous, drank less, and did not graze but minced quickly back across the meadow and began to run at the head of the dry wash. Jenny slept with her head hanging, and did not hear them come or go.

Suttler woke lazy and still red-eyed, and spent the morning drinking at the well, eating and dozing on his blanket. In the afternoon, slowly, a few things at a time, he carried his pile to the cabin. He had a bachelor's obsession with order, though he did not mind dirt, and puttered until sundown, making a brush bed and arranging his gear. Much of this time, however, was spent studying the records on the cabin walls of the recent human life of the well. He had to be careful, because among the still legible names and dates, after Frank Davis, 1893, Willard Harbinger, 1893, London, England, John Mason, June 13, 1887, Bucksport, Maine, Mathew Kenling, from Glasgow, 1891, Penelope and Martin Reave, God Guide Us, 1885, was written Frank Hayward, 1492, feeling my age. There were other wits too. John Barr had written, Giv it back to the injuns, and Kenneth Thatcher, two years later, had written under that, Pity the noble redskin, while another man, whose second name was Evans, had written what was already a familiar libel, since it was not strictly true, Fifty miles from water, a hundred miles from wood, a million miles from God, three feet from hell. Someone unnamed had felt differently, saying, God is kind. We may make it now. Shot an antelope here July 10, 188— and the last number blurred. Arthur Smith, 1881, had recorded, Here berried my beloved wife Semantha, age 22, and my soul. God let me keep the child. J.M. said cryptically, Good luck, John, and Bill said, Ralph, if

you come this way, am trying to get to Los Angeles. B. Westover said he had recovered from his wound there in 1884, and Galt said, enigmatically and without date, Bart and Miller burned to death in the Yellow Jacket. I don't care now. There were poets too, of both parties. What could still be read of Byron Cotter's verses, written in 1902, said,

> . . . . . here alone
> Each shining dawn I greet,
> The Lord's wind on my forehead
> And where he set his feet
> One mark of heel remaining
> Each day filled up anew,
> To keep my soul from burning,
> With clear, celestial dew.
> Here in His Grace abiding
> The mortal years and few
> I shall. . .

but you can't tell what he intended, while J. A. had printed,

> My brother came out in '49
> I came in '51
> At first we thought we liked it fine
> But now, by God, we're done.

Suttler studied these records without smiling, like someone reading a funny paper, and finally, with a heavy blue pencil, registered, Jim and Jenny Suttler, damn dried out, March — and paused, but had no way of discovering the day — 1940.

In the evening he sat on the steps watching the swallows in the golden upper canyon turn bats in the dusk, and thought about the antelope. He had seen the new tracks also, and it alarmed him a little that the antelope could have passed twice in the dark without waking him.

Before false dawn he was lying in the willows with his carbine at ready. Rabbits ran from the meadow when he came down, and after that there was no movement. He wanted to smoke. When he did see them at the lower edge of the meadow, he was startled, yet made no quick movement, but slowly pivoted to cover them. They made poor targets in that light and backed by the pale desert, appearing and disappearing before his eyes. He couldn't keep any one of them steadily visible, and decided to wait until they made contrast against the meadow. But his presence was strong. One of the antelope advanced onto the green, but then threw its head up, spun, and ran back past the flank of the herd, which swung after him. Suttler rose quickly and raised the rifle, but let it down without firing. He could hear the light rattle of their flight in the wash, but had only a belief that he could see them. He had few cartridges, and the ponderous echo under the cliffs would scare them off for weeks.

His energies, however, were awakened by the frustrated hunt. While there was still more light than heat in the canyon, he climbed to the

abandoned mine tunnel at the top of the alluvial wing of the cliff. He looked at the broken rock in the dump, kicked up its pack with a boot toe, and went into the tunnel, peering closely at its sides, in places black with old smoke smudges. At the back he struck two matches and looked at the jagged dead end and the fragments on the floor, then returned to the shallow beginning of a side tunnel. At the second match here he knelt quickly, scrutinized a portion of the rock, and when the match went out at once lit another. He lit six matches, and pulled at the rock with his hand. It was firm.

"The poor chump," he said aloud.

He got a loose rock from the tunnel and hammered at the projection with it. It came finally, and he carried it into the sun on the dump.

"Yessir," he said aloud, after a minute.

He knocked his sample into three pieces and examined each minutely.

"Yessir, yessir," he said with malicious glee, and, grinning at the tunnel, "the poor chump."

Then he looked again at the dump, like the mound before a gigantic gopher hole. "Still, that's a lot of digging," he said.

He put sample chips into his shirt pocket, keeping a small black, heavy one that had fallen neatly from a hole like a borer's, to play with in his hand. After trouble he found the claim pile on the side hill south of the tunnel, its top rocks tumbled into the shale. Under the remaining rocks he found what he wanted, a ragged piece of yellowed paper between two boards. The writing was in pencil, and not diplomatic. "I hearby clame this hole damn side hill as far as I can dig in. I am a good shot. Keep off. John Barr, April 11, 1897."

Jim Suttler grinned. "Tough guy, eh?" he said.

He made a small ceremony of burning the paper upon a stone from the cairn. The black tinsel of ash blew off and broke into flakes.

"O.K., John Barr?" he asked.

"O.K., Suttler," he answered himself.

In blue pencil, on soiled paper from his pocket, he slowly printed, "Becus of the lamented desease of the late clamant, John Barr, I now clame these diggins for myself and partner Jenny. I can shoot too." And wrote, rather than printed, "James T. Suttler, March—" and paused.

"Make it an even month," he said, and wrote, "11, 1940." Underneath he wrote, "Jenny Suttler, her mark," and drew a skull with long ears.

"There," he said, and folded the paper, put it between the two boards, and rebuilt the cairn into a neat pyramid above it.

In high spirit he was driven to cleanliness. With scissors, soap, and razor he climbed to the spring. Jenny was there, drinking.

"When you're done," he said, and lifted her head, pulled her ears and scratched her.

"Maybe we've got something here, Jenny," he said.

Jenny observed him soberly and returned to the meadow.

"She doesn't believe me," he said, and began to perfect himself.

He sheared off his red tresses in long hanks, then cut closer, and went over yet a third time, until there remained a brush, of varying density, of stiff red bristles, through which his scalp shone whitely. He sheared the beard likewise, then knelt to the well for mirror and shaved painfully. He also shaved his neck and about his ears. He arose younger and less impressive, with jaws as pale as his scalp, so that his sunburn was a red domino. He burned tresses and beard ceremoniously upon a sage bush, and announced, "It is spring."

He began to empty the pockets of his shirt and breeches onto a flat stone, yelling, "In the spring a young man's fancy," to a kind of tune, and paused, struck by the facts.

"Oh yeah?" he said. "Fat chance."

"Fat," he repeated with obscene consideration. "Oh, well," he said, and finished piling upon the rock notebooks, pencil stubs, cartridges, tobacco, knife, stump pipe, matches, chalk, samples, and three wrinkled photographs. One of the photographs he observed at length before weighting it down with a .45 cartridge. It showed a round, blonde girl with a big smile on a stupid face, in a patterned calico house dress in front of a blossoming rhododendron bush.

He added to this deposit his belt and holster with the big .45.

Then he stripped himself, washed and rinsed his garments in the spring, and spread them upon stones and brush, and carefully arranged four flat stones into a platform beside the trough. Standing there he scooped water over himself, gasping, made it a lather, and at last, face and copper bristles also foaming, gropingly entered the basin and submerged, flooding the water over in a thin and soapy sheet. His head emerged at once. "My God," he whispered. He remained under, however, till he was soapless, and goose pimpled as a file, he climbed out cautiously onto the rock platform and performed a dance of small, revolving patterns with a great deal of up and down.

At one point in his dance he observed the pictograph journey upon the cliff, and danced nearer to examine it.

"Ignorant," he pronounced. "Like a little kid," he said.

He was intrigued, however, by some more recent records, names smoked and cut upon the lower rock. One of these, in script, like a gigantic handwriting deeply cut, said ALVAREZ BLANCO DE TOLEDO, Anno Di 1624. A very neat, upright cross was chiselled beneath it.

Suttler grinned. "Oh yeah?" he asked, with his head upon one side. "Nuts," he said, looking at it squarely.

But it inspired him, and with his jack-knife he began scraping beneath the possibly Spanish inscription. His knife, however, made scratches, not incisions. He completed a bad Jim and Jenny and quit, saying, "I should kill myself over a phoney wap."

Thereafter, for weeks, while the canyon became increasingly like a furnace in the daytime and the rocks stayed warm at night, he drove his tunnel farther into the gully, making a heap of ore to be worked,

and occasionally adding a peculiarly heavy pebble to the others in his small leather bag with a draw string. He and Jenny thrived upon this fixed and well-watered life. The hollows disappeared from his face and he became less stringy, while Jenny grew round, her battle-ship gray pelt even lustrous and its black markings distinct and ornamental. The burro found time from her grazing to come to the cabin door in the evenings and attend solemnly to Suttler playing with his samples and explaining their future.

"Then, old lady," Suttler said, "you will carry only small children, one at a time, for never more than half an hour. You will have a bedroom with French windows and a mattress, and I will paint your feet gold.

"The children," he said, "will probably be red-headed, but maybe blonde. Anyway, they will be beautiful.

"After we've had a holiday, of course," he added. "For one hundred and thirty-three nights," he said dreamily. "Also," he said, "just one hundred and thirty-three quarts. I'm no drunken bum.

"For you, though," he said, "for one hundred and thirty-three nights a quiet hotel with other old ladies. I should drag my own mother in the gutter." He pulled her head down by the ears and kissed her loudly upon the nose. They were very happy together.

Nor did they greatly alter most of the life of the canyon. The antelope did not return, it is true, the rabbits were fewer and less playful because he sometimes snared them for meat, the little, clean mice and desert rats avoided the cabin they had used, and the road-runner did not come in daylight after Suttler, for fun, narrowly missed him with a piece of ore from the tunnel mouth. Suttler's violence was disproportionate perhaps, when he used his .45 to blow apart a creamy rat who did invade the cabin, but the loss was insignificant to the pattern of the well, and more than compensated when he one day caught the rattler extended at the foot of the dump in a drunken stupor from rare young rabbit, and before it could recoil held it aloft by the tail and snapped its head off, leaving the heavy body to turn slowly for a long time among the rocks. The dominant voices went undisturbed, save when he sang badly at his work or said beautiful things to Jenny in a loud voice.

There were, however, two more noticeable changes, one of which, at least, was important to Suttler himself. The first was the execution of the range cow's calf in the late fall, when he began to suggest a bull. Suttler felt a little guilty about this because the calf might have belonged to somebody, because the cow remained near the meadow bawling for two nights, and because the calf had come to meet the gun with more curiosity than challenge. But when he had the flayed carcass hung in the mine tunnel in a wet canvas, the sensation of providence overcame any qualms.

The other change was more serious. It occurred at the beginning of such winter as the well had, when there was sometimes a light rime on the rocks at dawn, and the aspens held only a few yellow leaves. Suttler thought

often of leaving. The nights were cold, the fresh meat was eaten, his hopes had diminished as he still found only occasional nuggets, and his dreams of women, if less violent, were more nostalgic. The canyon held him with a feeling he would have called lonesome but at home, yet he probably would have gone except for this second change.

In the higher mountains to the west, where there was already snow, and at dawn a green winter sky, hunger stirred a buried memory in a cougar. He had twice killed antelope at the well, and felt there had been time enough again. He came down from the dwarfed trees and crossed the narrow valley under the stars, sometimes stopping abruptly to stare intently about, like a house-cat in a strange room. After each stop he would at once resume a quick, noiseless trot. From the top of the mountain above the spring he came down very slowly on his belly, but there was nothing at the well. He relaxed, and leaning on the rim of the basin, drank, listening between laps. His nose was clean with fasting, and he knew of the man in the cabin and Jenny in the meadow, but they were strange, not what he remembered about the place. But neither had his past made him fearful. It was only his habitual hunting caution which made him go down into the willows carefully, and lie there head up, watching Jenny, but still waiting for antelope, which he had killed before near dawn. The strange smells were confusing and therefore irritating. After an hour he rose and went silently to the cabin, from which the strangest smell came strongly, a carnivorous smell which did not arouse appetite, but made him bristle nervously. The tobacco in it was like pins in his nostrils. He circled the cabin, stopping frequently. At the open door the scent was violent. He stood with his front paws up on the step, moving his head in serpent motions, the end of his heavy tail furling and unfurling constantly. In a dream Suttler turned over without waking, and muttered. The cougar crouched, his eyes intent, his ruff lifting. Then he swung away from the door again and lay in the willows, but where he could watch the cabin also.

When the sky was alarmingly pale and the antelope had not come, he crawled a few feet at a time, behind the willows, to a point nearer Jenny. There he crouched, working his hind legs slowly under him until he was set, and sprang, raced the three or four jumps to the drowsy burro, and struck. The beginning of her mortal scream was severed, but having made an imperfect leap, and from no height, the cat did not at once break her neck, but drove her to earth, where her small hooves churned futilely in the sod, and chewed and worried until she lay still.

Jim Suttler was nearly awakened by the fragment of scream, but heard nothing after it, and sank again.

The cat wrestled Jenny's body into the willows, fed with uncertain relish, drank long at the well, and went slowly over the crest, stopping often to look back. In spite of the light and the beginning talk of the swallows, the old coyote also fed and was gone before Suttler woke.

When Suttler found Jenny, many double columns of regimented ants

were already at work, streaming in and out of the interior and mounting like bridge workers upon the ribs. Suttler stood and looked down. He desired to hold the small muzzle in the hollow of his hand, feeling that this familiar gesture would get through to Jenny, but couldn't bring himself to it because of what had happened to that side of her head. He squatted and lifted one hoof on its stiff leg and held that. Ants emerged hurriedly from the fetlock, their lines of communication broken. Two of them made disorganized excursions on the back of his hand. He rose, shook them off, and stood staring again. He didn't say anything because he spoke easily only when cheerful or excited, but a determination was beginning in him. He followed the drag to the spot torn by the small hoofs. Among the willows again, he found the tracks of both the cougar and the coyote, and the cat's tracks again at the well and by the cabin doorstep. He left Jenny in the willows with a canvas over her during the day, and did not eat.

At sunset he sat on the doorstep, cleaning his rifle and oiling it until he could spring the lever almost without sound. He filled the clip, pressed it home, and sat with the gun across his knees until dark, when he put on his sheepskin, stuffed a scarf into the pocket, and went down to Jenny. He removed the canvas from her, rolled it up and held it under his arm.

"I'm sorry, old woman," he said. "Just tonight."

There was a little cold wind in the willows. It rattled the upper branches lightly.

Suttler selected a spot thirty yards down wind, from which he could see Jenny, spread the canvas and lay down upon it, facing towards her. After an hour he was afraid of falling asleep and sat up against a willow clump. He sat there all night. A little after midnight the old coyote came into the dry-wash below him. At the top of the wash he sat down, and when the mingled scents gave him a clear picture of the strategy, let his tongue loll out, looked at the stars for a moment with his mouth silently open, rose and trotted into the desert.

At the beginning of daylight the younger coyote trotted in from the north, and turned up towards the spring, but saw Jenny. He sat down and looked at her for a long time. Then he moved to the west and sat down again. In the wind was only winter, and the water, and faintly the acrid bat dung in the cliffs. He completed the circle, but not widely enough, walking slowly through the willows, down the edge of the meadow and in again not ten yards in front of the following muzzle of the carbine. Like Jenny, he felt his danger too late. The heavy slug caught him at the base of the skull in the middle of the first jump, so that it was amazingly accelerated for a fraction of a second. The coyote began it alive, and ended it quite dead, but with a tense muscular movement conceived which resulted in a grotesque final leap and twist of the hind-quarters alone, leaving them propped high against a willow clump while the head was half buried in the sand, red welling up along the lips of the distended jaws. The cottony underpelt of the tail and rump stirred gleefully in the wind.

When Suttler kicked the body and it did not move, he suddenly dropped

his gun, grasped it by the upright hind legs, and hurled it out into the sage-brush. His face appeared slightly insane with fury for that instant. Then he picked up his gun and went back to the cabin, where he ate, and drank half of one of his last three bottles of whiskey.

In the middle of the morning he came down with his pick and shovel, dragged Jenny's much-lightened body down into the dry-wash, and dug in the rock and sand for two hours. When she was covered, he erected a small cairn of stone, like the claim post, above her.

"If it takes a year," he said, and licked the salt sweat on his lips.

That day he finished the half bottle and drank all of a second one, and became very drunk, so that he fell asleep during his vigil in the willows, sprawled wide on the dry turf and snoring. He was not disturbed. There was a difference in his smell after that day which prevented even the rabbits from coming into the meadow. He waited five nights in the willows. Then he transferred his watch to a niche in the cliff, across from and just below the spring.

All winter, while the day wind blew long veils of dust across the desert, regularly repeated, like waves or the smoke of line artillery fire, and the rocks shrank under the cold glitter of night, he did not miss a watch. He learned to go to sleep at sundown, wake within a few minutes of midnight, go up to his post, and become at once clear headed and watchful. He talked to himself in the mine and the cabin, but never in the niche. His supplies ran low, and he ate less, but would not risk a startling shot. He rationed his tobacco, and when it was gone worked up to a vomiting sickness every three days for nine days, but did not miss a night in the niche. All winter he did not remove his clothes, bathe, shave, cut his hair or sing. He worked the dead mine only to be busy, and became thin again, with sunken eyes which yet were not the eyes he had come with the spring before. It was April, his food almost gone, when he got his chance.

There was a half moon that night, which made the canyon walls black, and occasionally gleamed on wrinkles of the overflow. The cat came down so quietly that Suttler did not see him until he was beside the basin. The animal was suspicious. He took the wind, and twice started to drink, and didn't, but crouched. On Suttler's face there was a set grin which exposed his teeth.

"Not even a drink, you bastard," he thought.

The cat drank a little though, and dropped again, softly, trying to get the scent from the meadow. Suttler drew slowly upon his soul in the trigger. When it gave, the report was magnified impressively in the canyon. The cougar sprang straight into the air and screamed outrageously. The back of Suttler's neck was cold and his hand trembled, but he shucked the lever and fired again. This shot ricocheted from the basin and whined away thinly. The first, however, had struck near enough. The cat began to scramble rapidly on the loose stone, at first without voice, then screaming repeatedly. It doubled upon itself, snarling and chewing in a small furious circle, fell and began to throw itself in short, leaping spasms upon

the stones, struck across the rim of the tank and lay half in the water, its head and shoulders raised in one corner and resting against the cliff. Suttler could hear it breathing hoarsely and snarling very faintly. The soprano chorus of swallows gradually became silent.

Suttler had risen to fire again, but lowered the carbine and advanced, stopping at every step to peer intently and listen for the hoarse breathing, which continued. Even when he was within five feet of the tank the cougar did not move, except to gasp so that the water again splashed from the basin. Suttler was calmed by the certainty of accomplishment. He drew the heavy revolver from his holster, aimed carefully at the rattling head, and fired again. The canyon boomed, and the east responded faintly and a little behind, but Suttler did not hear them, for the cat thrashed heavily in the tank, splashing him as with a bucket, and then lay still on its side over the edge, its muzzle and forepaws hanging. The water was settling quietly in the tank, but Suttler stirred it again, shooting five more times with great deliberation into the heavy body, which did not move except at the impact of the slugs.

The rest of the night, even after the moon was gone, he worked fiercely, slitting and tearing with his knife. In the morning, under the swallows, he dragged the marbled carcass, still bleeding a little in places, onto the rocks on the side away from the spring, and dropped it. Dragging the ragged hide by the neck, he went unsteadily down the canyon to the cabin, where he slept like a drunkard, although his whiskey had been gone for two months.

In the afternoon, with dreaming eyes, he bore the pelt to Jenny's grave, took down the stones with his hands, shoveled the earth from her, covered her with the skin, and again with earth and the cairn.

He looked at this monument. "There," he said.

That night, for the first time since her death, he slept through.

In the morning, at the well, he repeated the cleansing ritual of a year before, save that they were rags he stretched to dry, even to the dance upon the rock platform while drying. Squatting naked and clean, shaven and clipped, he looked for a long time at the grinning countenance, now very dirty, of the plump girl in front of the blossoming rhododendrons, and in the resumption of his dance he made singing noises accompanied by the words, "Spring, spring, beautiful spring." He was a starved but revived and volatile spirit. An hour later he went south, his boot soles held on by canvas strips, and did not once look back.

The disturbed life of the spring resumed. In the second night the rabbits loved in the willows, and at the end of the week the rats played in the cabin again. The old coyote and a vulture cleaned the cougar, and his bones fell apart in the shale. The road-runner came up one day, tentatively, and in front of the tunnel snatched up a horned toad and ran with it around the corner, but no farther. After a month the antelope returned. The well brimmed, and in the gentle sunlight the new aspen leaves made a tiny music of shadows.

DAVID DAICHES:

Problems for Modern Novelists

Part I: THE NOVEL AS SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

It would be a rash person who, in the face of the many and diverse shapes which the novel has assumed in modern times, would be prepared to give a simple definition of fiction which would embrace all the different varieties. The novel has been serving a great number of different functions, ethical, rhetorical, scientific, and if we attempt to find a definition which will be equally apposite to the work of Virginia Woolf and James T. Farrell, of James Branch Cabell and Sinclair Lewis, of Upton Sinclair and Julian Green, we shall find ourselves held up by the initial difficulty of finding, even in the most general sense, a literary purpose common to all these writers. The fact is that the novel, while retaining all its older functions, has become, and has been for some time, the standard way of drawing the attention of the public to any set of ideas or facts in which the author happens to be interested. It may be a fable or a report, a piece of history or a piece of rhetoric, pure speculation or pure description. The subject matter may be past or present, largely real or purely imaginary, plausible or fantastic—anything from the fantasies of Kafka to the plain chronicling of the "social realists" of the 1930's. It is still fashionable for the literary critic to begin a review of a book of verse by defining poetry: but who in our time defines fiction?

Any differences existing between the practitioners of any art are reflected in exaggerated form in the standards and judgments of the critics, and it is not therefore to be wondered at that one critic will today judge a given novel with reference to the degree with which it suggests an effective remedy for certain social ills, another will consider merely the accuracy with which the author portrays a given environment, a third will concentrate his attention on the plausibility of the action in terms of some psychological theory, a fourth will talk about the extent to which the novel reminded him of his childhood in a midwestern town, a fifth will discuss whether it is "well written," and yet a sixth will draw attention to its merits or defects by comparing it with *War and Peace*. In other words, the critics are not certain what they ought to look for in a novel.

And of course there are many things which the critic might reasonably look for in a novel. Two features, however, our academic critics have long since established as indispensable to a work of fiction, namely, plot and character. Both have been implicitly re-defined by modern novelists to include what Fielding and Jane Austen and Dickens and even Henry James

would hardly have recognized as such. But they are still there. It might therefore be useful to begin a discussion of the problems facing the modern writer and critic of fiction with some examination of these traditional concepts. We shall start with character, for reasons that will become obvious as the argument proceeds.

Most novels develop their meaning through a communication to the reader of the imagined adventures (psychological and physical, occasionally only one or the other of these two kinds) of imaginary characters. These characters always function in some degree as symbols: that is, the characters insofar as they act and are acted upon are represented, through any of a variety of devices, as illuminating more than the behavior of some fortuitously chosen individual. Characters in fiction are always symbols to some extent, and their interest largely derives from this fact. The reader is interested because the character illuminates more than just himself. A character who sheds light only on himself is felt to be inadequately treated even on historical standards (for, obviously, good historical writing is not simply atomistic) and is even more inadequate by any artistic criterion. The hero of a novel is always more than what he appears to be at first sight.

The kind of symbolization employed by the novelist varies in accordance with his interest and intention. The character might be expanded into an historical symbol, illuminating a certain section of man's past, as for example in *Rob Roy*; or the symbol might be social, exemplifying certain kinds of relations between man and his fellows or man and his environment, as in *The Grapes of Wrath*; or it might be political, presenting situations determined primarily by problems of government and organization, as in the novels of Malraux; or the symbol might be psychological, as in the novels of James or Virginia Woolf, indicating phases of the relation between man and his consciousness; or it might be topographical, as in the regional novel, presenting man in the light of his local traditions. But always the characters are symbols: they represent situations which, though unique in the way they are presented, are not unique in their implications. They become, as the novel proceeds, not simply characters taking part in a given action, but characters illuminating, through their "doing and suffering," certain phases of experience.

These examples of kinds of symbolization are not, of course, meant to be exhaustive, nor is it suggested that any one character in any one novel remains in only one of these categories. A novel such as *How Green Was My Valley* combines social, psychological and topographical symbolization, and perhaps historical as well. Indeed, it may be questioned whether there can be such a thing, for the purposes of the novelist, as a *purely* historical symbol.

A novel sets up a series of symbolic characters and situations that are made convincing through appropriate machinery. One can make a distinction (more easily in theory than in practice) between the skill required to handle this machinery, which is a question of the writer's

skill or *craft,* and the symbolic quality of the situations, which derive from the author's insight or *art.* To see an object or an incident or a character as a symbol demands the insight of an artist; to know how to convey your vision to your readers demands the skill of a craftsman. But of course this distinction, while helpful in theory, is constantly blurred in practice. A sense of language might suggest to a writer a certain train of images or incidents which would then take on a symbolic significance because of the sound and pattern of the words which suggested them. The insight of an artist is never independent of his sensitivity to his medium.

But what kind of machinery is the "appropriate" machinery that will enable the writer to get across effectively the symbolic nature of his characters? This is not an easy question to answer. It depends to some extent on the writer's ability to elicit a guaranteed response, on his ability to throw around the reader, as he reads, the kind of atmosphere that will make him sensitive to the kind of insights the writer is trying to communicate. In a sense, therefore, the question is not wholly an aesthetic one: what might almost be called tricks of the propagandist are needed. From one point of view, all art is in its initial effects a form of persuasion.

To take some examples from novelists of the past: It is essential for Jane Austen to communicate to the reader a sense that he is sharing her placid elevation; the reader here is not one of the author's characters (as he is in the average motion picture) but shares the author's superiority to her characters. Unless this relationship is established, the proper symbolization of character and incident cannot take place. The machinery used by Jane Austen to establish it is largely the device of irony, judiciously and not too heavily employed. Sir Walter Scott's problem is very different. If his readers cannot be brought to share his warm-hearted interest in history "romantically" interpreted and his feeling of satisfaction in following characters in and out of an historical situation, then they remain unable to appreciate the real meaning both of characters and action. Scott is a good example of the novelist whose lack of confidence in his own ability to communicate his symbolization leads him to introduce an "overplot," that is, to superimpose on the real action a superficial love story, with hero and heroine who generally marry at the end. That is why, from *Waverley* on, the ostensible theme of Scott's novels is never the real theme. The story of the love of Waverley and Rose Bradwardine is the apparent but not the real story of *Waverley*: the real theme is the tragic one of the Jacobite Rebellion and the lost cause of Scotland's independence. (For to Scott, as to so many 18th-century Scotsmen, the Jacobite movement meant a struggle for the old, romantic, independent Scotland.) The main theme of all Scott's better novels is essentially tragic: it is that the union with England and the material gains which resulted meant the loss of all that was romantic and picturesque in Scotland's history. That explains both Scott's conservatism in politics and his technique as a novelist. As a loyal supporter of the crown, he could not admit—scarcely even to himself—that his sympathies were with the Jacobites and the old romantic Scotland

which he saw passing away so rapidly; therefore, as most of his novels are really the tragic record of this passing away, he had to give them some other meaning on the surface. His plot patterns are, consequently, almost always dual, and the true symbolization is played down so that the superficial reader will not notice that Waverley is an irrelevant character for a real understanding of the novel of that name; that the real centre of interest in *The Heart of Midlothian* is the smugglers and the old-fashioned backward-looking characters and an English queen's reactions to Scotland (a tragic necessity that Scotland's fate should be in the hands of an English queen); that the defeated rebel, Balfour of Burleigh, is the real hero of *Old Mortality;* that the love interests in *Guy Mannering* and *The Antiquary* are extraneous to the story; and that the greatest of Scott's novels is *Redgauntlet,* where for the only time he faces openly the problem that haunts him throughout his career, the problem of the fate of feudal ideals of glory in the modern world, and writes a tragedy in which the marriage of the hero and heroine represents the thinnest of all disguises. The belated little band of forlorn Jacobites in *Redgauntlet,* and the fate they meet, are (as Edwin Muir was first to see[1]) the real key to an understanding of Scott's mind and art.

Scott's problem is an example of the problems that sometimes arise in finding adequate machinery for achieving the proper symbolization of character and action in fiction. In his work, the dualism in symbolization resulted from a psychological conflict within his own character. But to return to the discussion of the prerequisites for effective symbolization. The necessity for Dickens was that his readers should acquiesce in accepting some defeats as comic and others as tragic, and that this line should be kept always perfectly distinct. (When it is not kept distinct, as in his treatment of Jingle at the end of the Pickwick Papers, the result is that the symbolic meaning of the characters becomes confused.) The necessity for Thomas Love Peacock—a novelist who deserves more discussion than he generally receives—was that the reader should succumb to a mood of intellectual and physical well being: only such a mood would allow the novel to be read properly and the proper meanings to arise out of character and incident. As a final example we may cite Hardy, who is almost unique among novelists in demanding from his readers a certain acquiescence in the importance of unmotivated events: if the reader does not grant that acquiescence he can never see the novel for what it is meant to be. The opening of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* provides a very good example of how Hardy tries to predispose the reader to accept this premise. The action out of which the whole of the novel arises is the product of a freak and fortuitous mood.

All these novelists must employ machinery whose function it is to enable the reader to make the proper symbolization of character and action. Machinery is the method of necessary preliminary contact between writer

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[1] See Edwin Muir's *Scott and Scotland.* London, 1936; p. 157 ff.

and reader. Readers of Scott's novels will have noticed how often he begins by projecting before the reader's eyes two—or more—travellers who "might have been seen" wending their way across a mountain pass in the late summer of 17—. This device of referring to the hypothetical observer of real characters in a specific region and in a year which is deliberately left unspecified yet indirectly made clear to any reader who has his wits about him—this device succeeds in drawing together writer and reader into a common historical excursion; both peer into the past, and the author has the reader by the arm. Often Scott opens with an historical discussion of the state of the country in the period and then proceeds abruptly to take the reader by the arm and introduce him to the two travellers or the solitary stranger. In his earlier novels, he is just as likely to open with a laborious account of the early life and education of the nominal hero; but it was not long before he found machinery more appropriate to the kind of contact he wanted to make with his readers. No better contrast with this kind of contact could be made than by citing as our next example the methods of Sterne, whose relation to his readers is fairly uncommon among novelists. The symbolization which Sterne achieves is such that his characters and incidents become in a sense illustrations of the author's own character; the symbols are what might be called *confessional,* and have more in common with the methods of a personal essayist such as Lamb than with those of any of the novelists of his day. "Confessional symbolization" — to coin an ugly but suggestive phrase — has become less rare since Sterne's day, but still causes confusion among critics who cannot see it for what it is. A study of the opening chapters of *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* will show how brilliantly Sterne manages to establish that preliminary contact with the reader that the nature of his work demands. The methods of, say, Virginia Woolf in the openings of her novels, show another way of making such contact, with a very different kind of symbolization in view. In Mrs. Woolf's novels the incidents and impressions that occur in daily life become, when properly recorded, means to the communication of subtle and transient insights into the nature of experience. Hence that sense of familiar everyday activity in association with highly rarefied speculation must be got across right away if the novel is not to fall apart (as her earliest novels in fact did, because the opening chapters were inadequate to their task.) The opening chapters of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* give a clear indication to the reader of the kind of symbols the novels are going to bring before him. Joyce, who differs from all other novelists in that the symbolic expansion of character and incidents in his work is (theoretically at least) infinite, suggests this not only by the title but by introducing the speculative and symbolizing mind of Stephen Dedalus before Bloom, the real hero, is allowed to enter.

These are random examples, introduced to show the importance of the preliminary contact made by the novelist. Without such contact the novel falls apart, however brilliantly written. The contact might be ironic, sentimental, tragic, comic, or of a kind that cannot be defined in any of

these traditional terms. It provides the envelope, the frame, with reference to which the correct symbolic expansion is made by the reader. Is the character of Hamlet a symbol of the meditative man in a world of extroverts, or of the unpolitical man in a political environment, or of the man who seeks a revenge too tremendous to be achieved in any single act, or of something much more complex than any of them? The author must provide us with machinery for reading the work properly, for expanding characters and incidents into the proper symbolic meaning.

From the point of view of the writer, the most important initial problem is to find the point of preliminary contact—the thin edge of the wedge, as it were. Or, to change the metaphor, the reader must be made to fall down the rabbit-hole before the narrative which follows can take on its proper meaning for him. Indeed, *Alice in Wonderland* provides a very simple example of this sort of procedure: after Alice has fallen down the rabbit-hole, both the kind of probability the reader will accept and the kind of meaning he will see in the characters and events are determined—the book can now be read properly. The problem is at its most complex in novels like those of Franz Kafka, who deliberately refuses to admit that probability and symbolization change, and yet (as in *The Trial*) the events themselves indicate a change. It is this conflict between machinery and meaning that gives Kafka's work its strange, almost sinister quality, something that is not quite allegory and not quite reportage. It is not an easy method to imitate and is very rare in the history of fiction. For writers like Swift and Samuel Butler do not employ this deliberate paradox: they prepare the reader for the shift, by a voyage or some other kind of transition comparable to Alice's falling down the rabbit-hole.

This question of establishing preliminary contact with the reader is not one that can be discussed in a purely formal manner. It is not, that is to say, a matter simply of the relation of the parts of the work to the whole, for it concerns also the relation of the parts to the envelope which stretches from writer to reader and is partly dependent on the reader's prejudices, attitudes, and general mental situation.

Thus the problem for the novelist really becomes the problem of utilizing to the maximum the available prejudices of the reader, for the purpose of creating the proper symbolization. And this suggests that all fiction—indeed, all art—possesses a rhetorical aspect whether we like to admit it or not. Most art makes its initial appeal in some sense rhetorically: that is, the devices employed in order to ensure proper symbolization are nearly always rhetorical, persuasive, working on the reader's available preconceptions and prejudices. In employing these devices the writer must take into account the needs of special audiences.

But here an objection can immediately be raised. If this is so, why should novels written for one generation be effective for another? The answer is two-fold. In the first place, many novels—in fact, the majority—are properly appreciated only by the audience which the writer had in mind in contriving his machinery. These are the great numbers of bad

novels which each generation takes to its heart but which the next generation forgets. Bad novels are often popular for the generation for which they were written for the simple reason that their authors contrive not only the methods of symbolization but the actual kind of symbolization they employ with reference to the prejudices and desires of the majority. The love stories in the pulp magazines are meant to serve as wish-fulfilments and satisfactions of desires to escape for a vast number of people whose lives are drab and uninteresting. But what about the great novels which are enjoyed with even more enthusiasm by readers of later generations? If the machinery of these novels was devised in order to utilize the prejudices of the author's contemporaries, is that machinery effective for readers of a later age? And if not, why do the books continue to be appreciated?

Let us consider once again the openings of Scott's novels. One will have to go far to find a modern critic who will defend these opening chapters: to modern eyes they seem clumsy, even naive. We appreciate Scott in spite of his clumsy techniques, not because of them. For modern readers, in fact, the writer's quasi-rhetorical attempt to establish preliminary contact does not work. We are not put into the frame of mind by Scott's introductory chapters that he expected of us. But—and this is important—the preliminary rhetorical preparations are less necessary for novelists who have established themselves in the tradition of great writers, for, taking for granted that their symbolization is effective, we actively try to "get" it—and we succeed. In other words, we read the classics more *actively* than we read contemporary works. Homer's devices to achieve proper symbolization may often be artificial and unconvincing to us, but then we do not need them, because we are actively looking for the proper symbolization, and so we find it without the helps that were necessary for an earlier audience. We are prepared to work harder in reading a classic, because we know, from the report of generations of critics, that there is something worth getting in the work. We do not trust to our first reactions in reading Lucretius or Dante; we do not surrender passively to the atmosphere which Dante created in his *Divine Comedy* so that he might be sure of the proper kind of attention from his contemporaries; knowing that whatever our initial lack of acquiescence in the machinery the writer has, nevertheless, something impressive to say, we persist until finally the meaning is adequately expanded.

This is one reason why the judging of contemporary writing is so difficult. We are much more at the mercy of the initial rhetoric with a contemporary writer than with a classic, whose worth has been proved and the rhetorical aspects of whose works we can ignore. The rhetoric of symbolization diminishes in importance as the work becomes accepted as great. Hemingway, in putting across the proper kinds of meaning in *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* has to employ devices relying on the contemporary definition of a hero and the contemporary view of what is most worth recording in human affairs; but the book could be appreciated, if the reader applied him-

self, without any dependence on these devices. The less rhetorical devices, such as his "epic" use of scenery and his ability to relate a sense of terrain to a sense of human destiny, will be noted by readers long after the machinery for indicating that the hero is a significant and symbolic figure has ceased to be persuasive.

Yet Hemingway commits himself to the use of rhetorical machinery to a greater extent than many of his contemporaries: in most of his novels he tries to construct a fairly substantial envelope stretching between himself and his readers, an envelope based on certain positive beliefs or at least on violent acceptances and rejections. Sometimes—as in *To Have and Have Not*—the machinery falls apart from the novel proper, and the rhetoric sticks out, appearing to have no relation to the characters and events it was meant to interpret. Steinbeck is another modern novelist who depends on a fairly substantial envelope, and the expansion of characters into symbols in *The Grapes of Wrath* is done by means of devices which arouse indignation and pity.

The antithesis of the Hemingway and Steinbeck kind of machinery is that employed by Virginia Woolf, who endeavors constantly to make the envelope that stretches between reader and writer sufficiently tenuous that it depends on the minimum of prejudice. (Joyce tries to make his depend on no prejudice at all.) Non-rhetorical fiction is rarer than most critics care to admit, and Virginia Woolf does come close to it. The more nearly fiction approaches lyric poetry, the more possible does non-rhetorical fiction become. When fable is completely replaced by vision, the non-rhetorical novel emerges—but then the novel ceases to exist as a novel. *Between the Acts* is barely fiction at all.

The problem for the novelist of today is that he has to make up his mind about this question of the "envelope": is he going to accept, with Hemingway and Steinbeck, the necessity for a more solid envelope, making his machinery more rhetorical and less lyrical—and in doing so return to the great English tradition in fiction, which is a rhetorical tradition in its main line (Fielding, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, etc.)? Or is he moving towards the more tenuous envelope, in the tradition of James, Proust, and Virginia Woolf? It looks as though the phase of the tenuous envelope has been passed. A world struggling to discover values would find rhetorical machinery too heavy to handle, but a world struggling to assert values will be likely to return to it. And it would be rash to regard such a return as a melancholy omen: after all, perhaps the two greatest novels of the western world, *The Brothers Karamazov* and *War and Peace*, have been written in the rhetorical tradition.

(*Part II*, Plot, Style, and the Question of Values, *will appear in the Summer issue.*)

GRAY BURR:

Dance in Two Dimensions

Thwarting the rhythm of the expert life
A spell of dust remembers every tone,
Tempo splits along a chronic edge
And syncopated grimness tames the bone.

O, dancers feel a chill invest the knee,
The tumbler cartilage constrict, inert.
With fear their shrunken blood creates
The leaden creep of hemlock toward the heart.

Conforming to the horns' suave holocaust,
A throaty liquor croons along the brain,
But wildest jazz preludes a saraband,
Exhaustion combs the gleam from every vein.

Grieve also, dancers, for the stubborn loves,
Supple of pulse by drums, caress of toe
That threaded silver-trellised clarinets
Now locked of throat in silence' toneless woe.

A dance is double vision of the scene:
Bifocal lens for astigmatic eye.
Dancers and dance parade one time,
One control pervades their melody.

The ball is over: revelers take roads
That pock the crust of earth with venture home;
Too subtly for the roadmap's surface lines,
All these converge upon a narrow Rome.

* * *

Five thousand hungers broken in a loaf
Remold a dual paradigm, now torn:
Nave, fertile with transept, breaks with cry
Of harvest burning richly in the horn.

Some sound, a sob of wind in larynx boughs
Shakes midnight from a further avatar:
Dark wine of Grecian fright in western gold
Welds single agonies into a star.

EDWIN BERRY BURGUM:

Franz Kafka and the Bankruptcy of Faith

We speak sometimes of our own writers of the "lost generation" of the twenties. But such terms are relative. American writers were by no means so lost at that time as their contemporaries in defeated Germany, and the importance of Kafka is that he was without question the most lost of them all. The fact that he was born of Jewish middle class parents in Prague when it was under Austrian domination only emphasized an alienation and insecurity which had become typical of the middle class generally. Culturally, moreover, Kafka was a German. He lived in Germany and wrote in the German language. And his attempt to escape a dominating father left his adolescence stranded upon the fluctuating shoals of the Weimar Republic. His own deep-seated despondency, which had not yet routed traditional obsessions of blind faith and vague hope, lay bare the perplexities of mind and the vacillations of conduct typical of German life generally under the Weimar Republic. His own diseased personality symbolized the disease at the heart of German society. The progress of his personal deterioration paralleled the degeneration of the society that produced him. And his own life ended as abruptly and prematurely as that of the young republic, though he died of tuberculosis some years before Hitler set himself up as the brutal father-symbol of the German people. Whether the work of so disordered a talent will live at all or only for a select audience may be disputable. But its historic importance can hardly be denied. Kafka's novels cut through the distracting irrelevancies of superficial realism and afford a direct participation in the degeneration of personality of the petty bourgeoisie which began under Bismarck and was completed under Hitler. They present this degeneration even more vividly to the foreign reader than *The Magic Mountain* does, because Kafka is incapable of any reasoned judgment upon his material. He takes us into the personality structure itself, remaining unconscious of its nature since he shares it, and unconscious of its concealment in ordinary men beneath the conventions of social intercourse because of his own abnormality.

This interpretation of Kafka has received curious confirmation in the kind of praise lavished upon him by the small group of his admirers that existed in Germany and repeated by its even smaller American counterpart. They have extolled him not for the reasons which I have put forward here, but for those which would have appealed alike to his own attitude and those of the Weimar Republic. They have given an almost hypnotic attention to his perverse and mystical religious faith. In that conflict which kept him morose and helpless between a belief in God he could not renounce and a skepticism he could not deny, they have condoned the

skepticism out of veneration for the faith. They have not seen tha this dubious faith is psychological evidence of the dissolution of the rea soning process itself. Kafka was incapable of even that low and easy forn of reasoning we call rationalization, so obscure and contradictory had be come the springs of personal conduct in him during this period of socia chaos. In the light of the great religious mystics of history, to emphasiz Kafka's religious mysticism can only mean to share his own incapacit for reasoned judgment.

Only Max Brod, the wisest among his admirers and the closest to him has suggested the possibility of a non-mystical approach to his work. Bro has published—apparently out of sheer sense of duty to the facts, sinc he does not relate it to his own exposition of Kafka's mysticism—consider able evidence that his personality was psychopathic. We may anticipat that sooner or later psychiatrists will discover that his novels are as re warding an object of investigation as those of Dostoievsky. The type of abnormal personality are not as varied as in the pre-revolutionar Russian writer. But the presentation of the particular type of whic Kafka was himself an example is even more rich and detailed within it limits since he became progressively more psychotic as his short life ra its course. But a novel is presumably something more than the book c devotions for a degenerate mysticism or a case history in psychiatry. I is also a communication to some sort of general public. I shall therefor limit my interest in the theological and psychiatric aspects of Kafka' work to their bearing upon his novels as an expression of certain pattern of living in our own era and as the satisfaction of the aesthetic needs of limited contemporary audience.

Since Kafka's last stories are almost exclusively devoted to his hallu cinations, they may be used to clarify the orientation I am seeking. I tak for this purpose the most extremely subjective of them all, "The Burrow." In this short story, which has a beginning but no end, the hero conceive that he is being pursued by what must be vaguely called enemies. But ther is nothing vague about the defenses with which he surrounds himself. H first digs a tunnel into the earth in which he hides like a mole. He conceal the entrance with foliage, and for a time feels safe from pursuit. But seems wise to make safety doubly sure by digging many branches to hi tunnel. Thus he will be able to elude the enemy at numerous points b circling around behind him. Next, in case through some accident h should not be able to do so, he decides to make an exit at the other en But no sooner has he completed this escape into the upper world than h realizes with dismay that he has also created another possible source c attack. Enemies may now enter at both ends and leave him caught at th middle. He becomes so frightened that he leaves his tunnel altogethe But above ground, even though he hides in the bushes, he feels unpr tected on every side; he lacks the tangible comfort of both walls and dar ness. So he returns, determined at least to protect his valuables (whic remain as abstract as his enemies) by building a special vault for them

His labor is baffled by the sandy soil. But he manages to beat the wall firm by desperate blows of his head; and he is delighted to discover that the blood flowing from his wounds actually welds the sand into a cement. His satisfaction is immediately interrupted, however, by the faint sound of digging elsewhere. The disconcerting suspicion crosses his mind that his enemies may have turned his own plan against him, and started digging parallel tunnels so that they may break through almost anywhere at the strategic moment. Though he listens intently and in every part of his maze, he cannot define the direction of the sound. He tries to close his ears to see whether it is a figment of his imagination. But he is too excited to make a fair test. In a crisis when his enemies may fall upon him at any moment, he flings himself the more hysterically into action. His only hope is to make the maze more labyrinthine. When the story breaks off, his frenzied digging is no longer guided by a plan and is already beginning to be baffled by fatigue.

That Kafka's anxieties have passed the norm and become psychotic in "The Burrow" is obvious. But there are curious proofs from the story that they have not yet reached the extreme and passed out of control. The first is a bit of symbolic action which shows that they are being kept in check by the sense of security he obtained from his disease. The image of blood from the hero's head which firmly cements the walls of his storage place for his valuables reveals Kafka's attitude toward his tuberculosis. Brod has quoted him as expressing relief that it obligated his breaking his engagement which had dragged on for five years. This passage makes it clear that his later hemorrhages afforded a more active protection of his spiritual values in general. The weakness of physical prostration by taking the burden from will and consciousness expiated his sense of guilt; and at the same time by diminishing his material values as a person seemed to reduce the liability to attack from without. The progress of his bodily disease, in other words, retarded the progress of his mental disease. The second evidence is the communicability of the story as a whole. Kafka has not used the special imagery of the advanced psychotic which is intelligible only to psychiatrists. A child could understand the story as readily as an adult. Perhaps its lack of overtone, its lack of the irony I have allowed to creep into my summary, is pathetic evidence of his surviving will to remain sane, of his direct reaching out to an audience he is willing to assume is receptive, is certainly not "enemies." Indeed, the suggestion in the story, weak though it is, that the sounds may be imaginary is a literal measure of the degree of sanity remaining; while the complete absence of humor testifies to the desperateness of his situation. But at the same time his capacity to write is not only an unconscious appeal for help; it is also a temporary source of security; it is the part of himself most adequately under control. And paradoxically since his obsessions have become more simple as they grow more extreme, his stylistic expression of them can give him the satisfaction of becoming more simple too. There is no real contradiction of psychotic content and the adequateness of the

expression. Doubtless this rare example of successful communication o psychotic content can be explained by the fact that his abnormality had lon since promoted the growth of a split between the functioning personalit and that latent awareness of it which is the source of the writer's talen A complete psychiatric investigation of Kafka would certainly shed light o that *terra incognita,* the nature of the creative talent in more norma persons.

But my problem here is rather with his audience. Presumably Kafk would not have developed as a writer and have eventually written "Th Burrow" if he had not sensed a similar agony in the society around him The presence of a Kafka cult proves that he was not mistaken. The exist ence of the story, as lucid as a parable from the Bible, must be take as an alarming measure of the amount of similar anxiety in the Weima Republic. If an investigation could be made, I think it would be discovere that a large percentage of Kafka's admirers (excluding of course man critics whose attitude must be in part one of professional interest) shar his disorders of personality. In the problem of the relation of literatur to its audience, therefore, I believe that Kafka is important evidence as t the meaning of "aesthetic distortion," "literary idealism," the difference in short, between life and art. In the broadest sense, psychologically, w are permitted to conclude that art brings into the open the latent tendencie of society, whatever they may be. From this point of view, the Kafka cul would not necessarily be composed of persons as abnormal as he, bu rather of those who possess similar tendencies which different life ex periences may be holding in check or which are in progress of formatio and doubtless will be formed more rapidly as a consequence of their ad miration. I cannot imagine any other readers accepting Kafka withou qualification. These alone will respond to his appeal to aid him by enter ing the confraternity of the doomed. For the time being, for them as fo him, the very lucidity of "The Burrow" may be consoling. But in the en content passes out of aesthetic control, the story breaks off; art ultimatel fails in its attempt to control life.

With more normal readers the reaction, I think, must be more com plex. We live in a period of unusual instability, and the average reade will not wish to add through his fiction to the amount of real anxiet circumstances are forcing upon him. He will reject "The Burrow" as re pulsive, and probably decide the rest of Kafka is also a waste of time A certain few may find a sadistic enjoyment in a story which seems t present anxieties they are free from. I found, myself, that with the pass age of time I transformed the story; and now when I meet persons whos neuroses resemble those in "The Burrow," I find I recall the story as hum orous. The future will probably take it in similar fashion as a literar curiosity, though only a minority of readers will be interested at all. Whe we live in a society which permits us to accept its content without a sens of personal threat, it will appear too monotonous to sustain interest. It concern with only one character, its unvaried repetition of the same motive

will cause its rejection for aesthetic reasons. But from this point of view also, Kafka retains his importance for the aesthetician, since this story illustrates the wide variation of reaction the same story may arouse in different readers.

One puts aside these later defects of personality in Kafka, and turns with relief to the aesthetic defects of his earliest work. Here the shortcomings are of a sort to testify to the initial possibility of normalcy in him. As a youth, Kafka seems to have had his share of our wholesome human desire to meet the world on its own terms, to act and to survive, indeed, to bring, however grotesquely, order out of conflict. He was scarcely more eccentric than the average petty bourgeois youth, anxious to get ahead and dominate other people. As a writer also he responded to the prevalent and I believe desirable practice of leaving whatever intellectual conclusion his novel was reaching to be implied symbolically from the action. But, although these are his aims in *Amerika,* he did not succeed in writing a gracious or even a comprehensible novel. *Amerika* consists of a series of episodes, each clear in itself, but culminating in a fragment the incomprehensibility of which emphatically registers his inability to solve his problem in terms of plot or symbolic meaning. Even though the ultimate failure so graphically presented in "The Burrow" may be latent here, and the immediate failure is evidence of his apprenticeship in his craft, most of the blame at this time must be put, I believe, on the inadequacy of the social background, of which Kafka was painfully conscious. The structural defects of the book are Kafka's record of the bankruptcy of what we sometimes call "the American way."

As though convinced of the validity of Spengler's thesis in *The Decline of the West* that the European situation was hopeless, Kafka sought to embrace Spengler's opinion that the future of European culture might lie in the United States. He goes in imagination to the country in which bourgeois attitudes have been least checked by aristocratic precedents, in which pragmatic philosophy has endeavored to relate the ideal to the actual without the least sullying of its purity. In contrast to all his later work *Amerika* presupposes an acceptance of the validity of the objective world, with the concomitant belief that one's ideals must be written into actuality by sweat and blood. Its hero, Karl Rossman, is the only one among his writings to whom Kafka gave a name. The others are unnamed or generalized into "K." And he is the only one who is conscious of a certain security in his physical strength. Whatever timidity he possesses may have been due to Kafka's latent masochism, but it is also normal to the inexperience of the adolescent. And it is concealed by a conscious acceptance of aggression as normal in human relationships. In short, Karl accepts the philosophy and psychology of rugged individualism. But like Mr. Hoover or Mr. Westbrook Pegler, he fears the combined aggression of the working class, since he conceives of the individual worker as a selfish illiterate brute and his labor union as the organization of racketeering to devour society. At the same time Karl is alarmed and disgusted to find that men of wealth live in a

false security. He refuses to avail himself of their friendly offers to wor not merely because he has an adolescent desire to make his way by his ow will, but because he cannot trust men who are so obtuse to their real dan gers. The millionaire whose palatial home outside New York he visits sit chatting in his vast drawing room indifferent to the drafts that blo through it because workmen employed to build a new wing have struc leaving walls as open to invasion as the entrance to what was later to b the burrow. This attitude may already be a neurotic one, but it has valid objective basis if one is an industrialist who continues to believ in rugged individualism. In other words, it anticipates the psychology c fascism. It is interesting to note that Karl ceases to worry on anothe occasion. He has been alarmed at the riotous street meetings of a politic candidate; but he calms down when informed that all these disorders mea nothing since the outcome has already been arranged by powerful in terests behind the scenes. He does not inquire as to who or what they are that they are powerful enough to dominate is sufficient for him.

Yet Kafka remains fundamentally an individualist. Stated in politic terms, his dilemma was that he could not become a fascist. Not its cruelt but its apparent denial of individualism prevented. In his concluding cha ter he sought a solution in which the actuality of free competition migh lie at peace with the spiritual presence of cooperation. Ruthless comp tition clearly has bred an unsatisfactory anarchy. The problem was t find some machinery to bring the spiritual and the material togethe without corrupting their essentially contradictory character: to provid that competition become spiritually cooperative and that the ideal chaste the practical like a catalyst without bureaucratic loss of its own integrit But when one examines the final story of the "Nature Theater of Oklahom (as when one tries to give content to "the American way"), no tangib program for action can be found. It is impossible to determine wheth the mechanism is to be governmental activity or the emergence of som private organization. Whichever it is, the improvement is clearly to b made gradually; the new organization is presumably a model which eith will be imitated elsewhere or will gradually and painlessly absorb th functions of other organizations into itself. The title of the new theat suggests that Kafka is giving the naturalistic basis of pragmatism a tri that he is testing the spiritual possibilities latent in the world of actualit But the most confident deduction one can make from this ambiguo and fragmentary allegory is that any such approach to the problem is like to be hypocritical, whether consciously or not. To take the project in th best light, it is probably a well-intentioned hoax. Its instigators, whoev they are (for we never get to the real motivating power in Kafka) are im pelled by the delusion that the material and the spiritual can be broug together. Certainly when Karl and his friends, wearied by the hazards competition in the East, go, like the latterday pioneers of the New De into the West where handbills (such as the Joads had naively accepte promise employment to all with the initiative to come, they find nothi

adequately prepared. To be sure (like the promise of a Second Front in the present war) a dramatic spectacle is being acted at the entrance. But one has positively to fight his way beyond the captivating static beauty of this tableau into the amphitheater behind, where everything is still chaotic. Clerks take down Karl's name, though his qualifications seem uncertain. Not only does nobody know what sort of pageant will be enacted on the cluttered race course; the reader feels an uneasy suspicion that the whole venture, the very project of a theater, is being put into the terms not of life but of some fictive and therefore practically useless if not spiritually delusory allegory of life instead. He is tempted to conclude that to believe the material world can have a spiritual aspect, to imagine that competition can be in any way allied with cooperation is a fallacy. Nor does he know whether it is wisdom on the part of the many that had kept them indifferent to the handbills; or whether the few, like Karl, who have the initiative to venture, are not themselves under the enchantment of "the American way."

Now I take it that within the limited social outlook available to Kafka all this is impressively sane comment. In *Amerika* Kafka's tendencies to abnormality have only freed him from the easy fallacious rationalizations which leave more normal individuals of prosperous bourgeois family in the realm of illusion. American readers will at first sight find Kafka's picture of American life amusingly inaccurate. He is as absurdly uninformed about the surface facts as he is incapable of the surface rationalizations. He knows America only as it is presented in our tabloid newspapers, in which the contradiction between the ideal and the actual glares from every column but is denied to exist on the editorial page. At one and the same time they present our country as the haven of the downtrodden, the land of opportunity, the hope of the future; and as the battlefield of anarchic individualism, of murder and racketeering, of Anglo-Saxon dominance, and the devil's right to the hindmost. The tabloids cut through the veil of distortion which the respectability of other papers draws over this living contradiction between our ideals of democracy and their too frequent violation in our practice. There is, of course, another side to the story, but one does not get it from this quarter, in these simonpure reflections of petty bourgeois hysteria and inconsistency, the validity of which Kafka could recognize from his foreign land.

When he turned back to the European society he knew directly, however, Kafka became convinced that his observation in *Amerika* was superficial. Men might appear to live in a state of brutal personal competition. Go deeper into their actions, and they are found to be the puppets of a hidden authority. A different kind of Nature Theater, so to speak, is actually in operation. It is only men's trust in it that is delusive. They do not realize that they are helpless under the authority of the evil that controls the material world. So now it is not their competition but their apathy that impresses Kafka: their ignorance of their own dilemma, their indifference to the difficulties of their fellow men. Kafka takes over the

picture of the "little man" that had already become established in German fiction, restless, impotent, insignificant. If he treats him without the usual contempt, but as a tragic figure, it is that he saw in the story of his helplessness the bankruptcy of his own optimism in *Amerika.*

In *The Trial,* the hero, "K," a clerk, trusted and expecting promotion for his fidelity, is served in his roominghouse with a warrant for an unnamed crime by two policemen. The officers themselves do not know nor care what the crime is, since their function is only to issue warrants for court appearance. Under such circumstances, the normal man, knowing himself innocent, would go about his business, confident that the mistake will readily be cleared up. K, on the contrary, in his humility and desire to cooperate with the civil authority, must drop his business, assume the preoccupied air of the guilty man, and take over the function of pushing his case through to a decision. His uncle secures the aid of an important lawyer who assures him to his surprise that all legal cases are actually settled out of court by influence or bribery. When neither works for him within a reasonable length of time, he invades the judicial offices where he makes a nuisance of himself since nobody has heard of his case. In due time he begins to grow desperate not only because his quest remains futile but because he begins to feel that some sinister authority has been ever-watchful and is becoming annoyed at this anxiety for the speedy triumph of justice. Perhaps this intangible authority may be outraged that so insignificant a man should inflame its own guilty conscience. So K, who has been hypnotized by trust, gradually becomes hypnotized by fear. Finally, two other policemen show up, take K to the edge of town, hand him a knife to slit his throat with, and when he demurs, thrust it home themselves.

The Trial has several layers of symbolic meaning, the most superficial of which I have just presented. It is an exposure of the evils of bureaucracy from the point of view of the common assumptions of democracy. The reader takes it first of all as a trenchant satire upon the delays of justice, the red tape by which the average man may well feel himself strangled in the modern democratic state and its characteristic business corporations, and which the inefficiency of the Weimar Republic merely pushed to the extreme of a tragic burlesque. It emphasizes the sadistic self-importance of some petty officials, the callous indifference of others, until the average citizen appears to get either no attention or abuse for having expected it. But at the same time that the action clarifies this contradiction between our bureaucratic structure and our ideals of democratic equality and individualism, it does not permit us to assume that any evil capitalists are to blame. Though bureaucracy surely defeats the natural aspirations of the common man, there is no assurance that it does anybody good. The fault is in the system, in the fact that life must be organized at all on a practical level. It would perhaps be appealing to conclude that the policemen who finally kill K have been authorized to do so by Nietzsche's supermen. But made sadistic by the system, they may have been acting at their

own impulse or in obedience to an authorized or unauthorized command anywhere along the line.

A second level of meaning is perceptible if we take the action as symbolic of the change in the German personality structure as a result of the functioning of bureaucracy under the Weimar Republic. The Republic, it must be remembered, arose after the collapse of an Empire which had functioned fairly efficiently within the surviving forms of feudalism. To defeat in the first World War therefore was added the insecurity caused by a graft in government less disguised and more reckless than under the Empire, accompanied by an unsettling confusion of novel ideas and policies. Faltering experiments in social reform and magniloquent pretense of progress alternated with the unexpected fall of the iron fist of police repression. But the little man with his feudal background humbly took the blame for his unhappiness upon himself, believing that only his insignificance prevented his recognizing the remote organizational wisdom that must exist at the top. Indeed, behind apparent inefficiency he felt the abject need for, and could sense the rising anger of, some new external authority that at whatever cost would remove the spiritual burden and the practical uselessness of the new freedom of the Weimar Republic. From this point of view, K's murder symbolizes the final ascendancy of fascism, with its delusive promise of a security beyond good and evil. Psychiatrically, K was waiting to be slain, going out of his way to get somebody else to remove the burden of seeking the just and the guilt of ambition and the mirage of freedom which had grown so disturbing that the security of individual annihilation drew him like a magnet, only he must, with the pathetic submission of the Bismarck tradition, receive even death as a grant from above. K's death is thus also this strange novelist's prophecy of the fictive life beyond either pride or humility of the Nazi automaton in which the human spirit has been slain. Here, I believe, the value of the novel for most readers is to be found. It affords us the most complete and subtle delineation of the petty bourgeois German temperament, in which feudal attitudes of obedience were translated into the needs of a belated capitalism under Bismarck; then were confused by the ineffectual democracy of the Weimar Republic; became suspicious of their own dawning self-reliance, and when this self-reliance seemed of no profit either to the individual or to society invited its slaughter and replacement by an even more excessive obedience and submission under Hitler than feudalism had imposed.

But it is a third level of meaning which gives Kafka's own intention in *The Trial.* He used the book to reject his toying with the possibilities of a naturalistic theology in *Amerika,* and to state his conviction that whatever is not spirit is evil. His hero's tragedy is that he repeats Kafka's error in *Amerika,* by seeking to root the spiritual in the material when he acts to promote justice. Governments and corporations, being materialistic, the powers of evil that control the practical world, are naturally aroused by the threat of virtue. Other ordinary citizens who accept the

conditions of the material world—that it knows neither good nor evil—and act automatically without idealism or insight, are not molested. On best survives in proportion as he can live as the passive unconsciou automaton of the powers of evil, in proportion indeed as he can remai completely in the realm of fantasy as far as our notions of democrac and progress are concerned. K made the mistake of acting in daily lif upon principles which are real in the spiritual world but must re main a fantasy in the material. Thus he violated the nature of the ma terial world, aroused the powers of evil that control it, and promoted it revenge in his own death. The theme was fortunately such as to permi *The Trial* to become the only one of Kafka's writings in satisfactor aesthetic form. The finality of its conclusion, moreover, is of an orde superior to that in other novels with a fatalistic philosophy such as Thoma Hardy's. For there is no emotional ambiguity. The horror and the relie of dying cancel into a state of tranquillity. The book has fulfilled its ow laws of inevitability, and we are done with it.

But though *The Trial* adequately explains the source of Kafka's mysti cism, it is concerned with only the negative aspect of it and does not il luminate its essentially paradoxical nature. His observation of life unde the Weimar Republic had become so cynical that no other escape was pos sible than the rejection altogether of the importance of the material worl Yet he was so involved in that world that he must reject it both verball and emotionally in its own terms. His mysticism had the same flavor a well as the same origin as Tertullian's despair at the corruption of th Roman Empire. He too was forced to believe what the evidence of hi senses had convinced him was absurd. Indeed his paradox was the mor glaring. In the fourth century Tertullian's axiom was less "absurd" be cause his era, though disillusioned, had inherited a disposition partial t a mystical view of the world, to which his dogma gave the assent of a ma by temper skeptical. But Kafka, living in an industrialized world whic had not secured order and happiness at the price of its loss of faith, wa overtaken by a bitterness so harsh that he could not let it rise into con sciousness. He was forced to bury it beneath the level of emotive expres sion, to reduce it to a matter of no importance, to grope for belief in spit of its being absurd. He was, in short, compelled to embrace a mysticism which, unlike previous types, subdued the body neither in the orienta fashion by inducing hysteria nor in western fashion by chaining it to wi under the authority of abstract logic. His must be a mysticism which jus tified the paralysis of will and the shrinking back from sensation, by set ting up a complete dichotomy between the spiritual and the material life Against his background of scientific rationalism, to believe the absur might be eccentric and psychopathic. But for the time being it seemed t make the facts of his experience endurable. He might escape schizophreni by assuming it to be the normal state of the human personality.

But the absurdity of the paradox has now to be directly faced. Exper ience was forcing Kafka further into his labyrinth. If *The Trial* had to b

written because the optimism lurking in the conclusion of *Amerika* had proved unfounded, *The Castle* had to be written because life was scarcely possible if one accepted only the approach of *The Trial.* Personal salvation demanded that the skeptical view of the world give way to its description through the eyes of faith. The materialistic aspect of man and human institutions, valid and hopeless on its level, sent Kafka hurrying into the burrow of faith. Only faith was not really an escape since somehow the spiritual existed side by side with the material, every person having only this curious relation to every other person that they alike were split into these two aspects essentially unrelated. The new explanation was only a new dilemma. If by definition of humanity itself, the flesh is unescapable, the spiritual must appear to function through the forms of the material. *The Castle,* therefore, is only Kafka's exaggeration of K's mistake in *The Trial* (from the theological point of view). The quest for God is certainly more comprehensive than the desire for human justice and the theological dilemma consequently more august. But psychologically the new situation was less difficult. One knew that the good, unlike the evil, was incapable of revenge. The very fact that one's search was to find out if it really existed to man's perception made life indeed the safer; action banished the misgiving that action might be useless. The average man doubtless did not need to pursue the castle because he was reconciled to the contradictions that life had thrust upon him. He had become resigned to a chaos he did not understand, whether he found it within himself or in the outside world. But I think Kafka was right in assuming that this was a view of the situation from the outside; or, at all events, that if it was the true situation, it could not last. Look inside any common individual and he does not have the impulse to act for the good such as led to downfall in *The Trial.* But, certainly, we may imagine Kafka arguing, if the impulse for the good is completely divorced from the practical, if it is nothing but man's quest for the disembodied perfection of God, there can be no revenge from the sources of evil. What he did not see was that he has made life ultimately useless and boresome.

It escaped him because his talent as a novelist was a distraction from the dilemmas of his mysticism. The fascination of the immediate creative task postponed his consciousness of ultimate implacable despair. It reduced the traditional dilemma of mystic communication: that mysticism posits the impossibility of communication at all. If he had lived in the middle ages, he would have repeated the thin allegorizing which was the best the medieval writer could achieve in human characterization. But the very skepticism of his age, by obligating the sort of novel in which the human personality must be first presented in all its immediate richness and inconsistency, enabled him to postpone recognition of the fact that *The Castle* was bound to remain another unfinished work. Kafka indeed sensed the inconsistencies in our personalities more keenly than most writers; for they were locked in permanent contradiction within himself. The new interest, furthermore, in the introspective novel with its apparent

indifference to the external world of material values must have normalized for him the malady of his personality, by affording him an appearance of escape from the level of *The Trial,* satisfactory for the time being. He could as a novelist thus take for the spiritual, as contrasted with the materialistic, the working of our unconscious as contrasted with our ordinary habit of living on the conscious surface of experience. By abandoning the consciousness under the joint auspices of the new technique of fiction and his developing psychosis, he could delude himself into believing that the presentation of the world as transformed by his own unconscious was the world of spiritual reality. Doubtless the process was chiefly unconscious. (And the reader should be reminded that my entire argument has been a rationalizing of what was for Kafka—who can scarcely be said to reason—a solely experiential process, the symbolic meanings of which I have been verbalizing.) But the result of the process was that for the time being the hostility of the actual lost its actuality, became transformed into the cold distance of the objective world as it appears in dreams, as, to the dreamer, it is the actuality hovering on the fringe of consciousness that is the dream. In the dream for the time being appears to lie the reality, and to Kafka's satisfaction if it did not possess the full-blown perfection that faith could hardly require this side the grave, it was at least harmless and impersonal.

Kafka has only transferred his doubts into a realm where they may be handled without emotional disturbance. The locus of *The Castle* is an isolated village high in the mountains. The atmosphere is that of the feudal pre-Bismarckian world, remote and ambiguous. The castle is even higher up, most of the time hidden in the mist and storm of the mountain top, and inaccessible because of the state of the roads. But in the village also the snow cuts off easy communication and reduces clarity of vision. Winter drives people indoors so that the scene (unlike that of *The Trial*) is never populous. When one breaks through the drifts to reach the peasant's door, it is opened as though suspicion of the stranger were confused with dislike of the cold. Even within the inn, though men crouch resentfully, they are half hidden by the shadows. The author appears to have been as much affected by the cold as his characters are. For he describes all this as though himself experiencing the same partial anesthesia. We scarcely realize, so extreme has the numbness of our sense become, that we are back in the competitive world of *Amerika.* The conviction in *The Trial* of implacable doom has disappeared. But the fact that everybody works for the castle, even though the spiritual must take this inconsistently materialistic form, guarantees to men non-competitive qualities also. Kafka's theology has succeeded in enriching his presentation of men and their social relationships. They are at last in his novels fully human, to the imagination of the normal reader, in that they now show what impresses us as being a realistic complexity. They are both aggressive and considerate, both selfish and unselfish. The reader follows their conversation or the description of their actions with the same lively interest in the immediate situation

which is certainly the essential characteristic of life itself, and the presence of which in this novel of Kafka's is the secret of its aesthetic worth. But the aesthetic satisfaction of the narrative has another ingredient in that this liveliness is entirely visual and verbal. The story has the coldness of the Grecian urn, the remoteness of the silent moving picture. Whatever happens we accept without any emotional involvement of our own. If our own emotions could be aroused, the book's flavor would become ironic as we read on. For it turns out that this flash of action and conflicting motive is a chaos. Men seem to act from impulse and their attempt to understand their action only leads into a maze of speculation. By implication, *The Castle* is a parody on the introspective novel, the elusiveness of our so-called "stream of consciousness."

In this benumbed world of Kafka's, though the act is always clear, its meaning and justification remain forever doubtful, and acts, therefore, cannot have coherence, when taken together. Now that life is presented in both its spiritual and material aspects, it becomes a bedlam of concrete particularities that lead nowhere. If we go within the single act to discover its motives, the act disintegrates. But it is the same when we pass from act to act. They fail to integrate into a pattern unless the perpetual repetition of Sysiphus' toil can be so described. The reader, for instance, gets the impression that K comes to the village bearing a definite letter employing him as a land surveyor of the castle. But as the book progresses, one begins to doubt whether K received such a letter or only came with the hunch that a job was vacant or thinking he could bluff his way. Nor do the castle officials succeed in clearing away the uncertainties. Possibly a letter had been sent some years ago, but they are positive that there has not been a valid recent communication and no such official is needed. Yet K, on his side, may well feel that a higher official (if he could reach him) may be better informed; the only guarantee that the bustling official he meets really acts for the castle is his appearance of self-assurance. Even this cannot be trusted, since if one got to know him better (as K did Amalia's brother) the arrogance might only hide his own inner doubts. For Amalia's brother, though he poses as a messenger of the castle, has no assurance that he is accepted as such on the hill. He can only try, becoming in human eyes a hypocrite, in the hope that the castle may reward him for his good intention by a sign that never comes. And since his good intention is often disproved by some human frailty, he lives in perpetual doubt of his deserving the reward he seeks. All this is clear as ecclesiastical symbolism. The existence of the spiritual itself has been reduced to the suspicious dimensions of an intuition within one's own obviously insufficient ego. The individual intuition of the divine has only the verification that other equally fallible persons seem to share it. For, if there is no inspired Bible that Kafka can trust, it goes without saying that he is not aware of the possible existence of an inspired religious institution. The castle is obviously a criticism of the organizational hierarchy in the Roman Catholic Church culminating in the inaccessible re-

cesses of the Vatican. But since Kafka begins by positing the absolut separation of spiritual and material, the book is a broader criticism als of the notion of spiritual hierarchy among men. It is primarily the Jewish Protestant-mystical tradition that is failing him. Its belief that the inne light, the indwelling of grace, is the only assurance of the possession o divine authority is what paradoxically he can no longer either believe o disbelieve. He cannot reject it because it seems tied up in his own pe sonality and that of other men with the restraining influence of conscienc a reversion from the cruel deed, a reaction against pride into humilit But the evidence is against it.

Equally devastating is the book's implied attack upon the pragmat philosophy which is the ultimate lay application of this Protestant tra dition. The book acknowledges the validity of the act as clearly as it mak a parody of the "will to believe." Always the act is there; what is wantin is any test of its "working." From this point of view *The Castle* com near to being a refutation of James' *Varieties of Religious Experienc* He gets close to shattering pragmatism by bringing into the open its e plicit metaphysics, and showing that it rests on the absurd foundation tha despite our inner doubts, we believe because others act as though they d and belief, thus secured, seems to do us good. Kafka's own mysticism i in fact, merely an emphasis upon this assumption which the pragmati makes only to neglect. The pragmatist has been able to neglect it becaus he has been distracted by the exhilaration of wallowing among partic larities which seem to add up to progress. But the misery and poverty o modern life, Kafka saw, have reduced the exhilaration, indeed have tran formed it for most persons into despair. At this point he seems to hav become aware that the pursuit through the medium of philosophy of th assumption that the good is what works (when what works is so evident the evil) lands the thinker in the theory of the useful make-believe, th philosophy of As-If. Though inclined to the same conclusion, Kafka hes tates to accept it. He recoils altogether from formal philosophy into tha variant of functioning pragmatism which is the writing of novels and tha peculiarity of its theory which accepts without a protest lack of coher pattern in both our emotional and intellectual life. Pragmatically the on certainty in *The Castle* is the efficacy of public opinion. Faith has becom a superstition in a world where nothing else but public opinion wou seem to work, even though it works to the disaster of the well-intentione For, as though to prove he had not forgotten *The Trial*, Kafka introduc one coherent episode: the fall of Amalia's family. They are socially ostr cized and reduced to beggary for a number of reasons (for nothing simple in Kafka), but essentially, I believe, because Amalia's father believ in progress, has tried to improve the fire department, and therefore ha sought to relate the spiritual to the material aspects of life. His spiritu urge became corrupted into personal pride and ambition, and the reven of the public upon his pride was the restoration of the hopeless chas between the two facets of the human personality.

How hopeless it was Kafka seems now to have realized. Once more, as though fatigued by the useless repetition of the same motions, the book breaks off in mid-course, leaving K as far as ever from the castle, which still stands upon its mountain top, sometimes visible to our senses through the mist. But we remain ignorant whether its material appearance justifies our assumption of spiritual power within. Perhaps, as Kafka suggested in a later story, our vision of God is as perverse and inaccurate as would be a dog's assumption of ideal qualities in its master. Kafka had lost his struggle to attain religious faith. The later stories like "The Burrow" ignore it. Fantasy and hallucination now are the last resort of a man who never had faith in humanity and could never secure a faith in God. His had been the symbolic prototype of the German personality. But he was forced to wander into death and madness alone. For Hitler had not yet offered the fantasy of a fantasy in his confraternity of the doomed, who for the time being were able to distort their doom into the hallucination of a glory. We who are more happily situated than Kafka can draw from his novels the desolate pleasure that there too we should have gone if we had been unable to believe in the potentialities of democracy and the common man.

ISRAEL NEWMAN:

When the Clock Fell

When the clock fell and the hours
Poured out heavily
And scattered over the floor
In tiny quick-silver seconds,
The furniture raw-materialized,
The painted walls followed.
As urgently
All his senses became one sense
Which colored, flattened
And turned into a ribbon.
This she tied in her rich hair and, preening
Before her finger nail of a glass
Framed preciously in her ring,
Grew rapidly smaller—contracted
Into a miniature of herself. Sure-footed
She stepped into that mirror passing
Her reflection on its way out.

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS:

Poem for Your Eye, Dante

I

Finger in breviary and banker's smile,
The bishop after dinner dotes on god;
E la sua volontate è nostra pace
Ponders. Forgets: the man pierced hell to say it.

The peace in fire and Florence learned
Is not the lollipop light of a six-year eye;
No barnyard heat, all life a cidery yawn;
Nor peace of ward, asylum, convent plot
Where stray the sweet Ophelias of the lord.

The Florentine's is fury and wild will:
The boy in the midnight special round the bend
Who sees a headlight on the single track
Swelling and near—his heart flies up away;
The pilot cabined in a whining dive
Watching the world grow large and photo-clear,
The meadow rocking up, the drunken barn,
The farmer pale and running, this is peace—
Quiet of queer midocean where the jaws
Of luminous lamprey, long as subways, hunt;
Quiet of stars, fire-engines reeling red
And shocking the lonely highways of the sky,
Whose influence felt a hundred hours away
Darkens all schedule of the sponsored air.

Tensity made perpetual is peace:
The night express head-onward, brakes in vain,
The cockpit treetop-high and screaming down,
Dante, is our desire.
Fata morgana, moment-without-end,
Candles in every heart a high chalet.

II

The scholar in a negro house of fame
Caught in thy delicate peril, marijuana;
The child-of-mary girl, ashamed of self
And yearning for the beaten flesh of Christ;

Cop virtuous in blue, and cocktail babe
Sobbing a rosary in her room alone;
The good man with his what-the-hell and beer;
Lothario shivering in the shame of dawn;
The wassailer, the watcher, and the waif
Are torrents to one sea and cannot stop.

Their fever is a halo bright on all
As bonfires are, that aureole the bum,
Tonic the tallow scholar, gild the poor,
Lie on the broken forehead like a rose.

In saddle-shoes and woollen, sweet with soap
Wander the college girls, kicking the leaves,
Scuffing the rubber relics of bought love,
Their bright hair flaunted like a cinema queen.

Green pity, father, pity for those who know
In church or tavern the peripheral lust;
Their compass regulate and star uncloud.
Or drowned in a shoreward ripple the white arm
That might have swum midocean; cut the tongue
That might have sung forever across the hill;
Sweet Babylon broken now that never shall rise.

The Genuine Ellis

> The soul too is dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard when she touches change.
> —Plato

One thought is all the burden of our learning:
What is and what is not.
For this
The kindergarten shines at first communion
And the slugged goon is shot.
The broker yachts the Florida wave. Slum-fevered
The lungs of lovers rot.

Local Boy, Nine, Swims Lake. Hits Fortieth Homer.
Wins All-American Rate.
Condescends to coke, revered; and lolls at many

A moonlit gate.
Desires
One girl—and a highschool teacher marries
That nextdoor date.

A Phi Beta Kappa sops head in a desperate ointment;
Is bald as a toad.
Morbid, reads stoic Plutarch, dotes on a razor;
One day
Digs at his throat.
Is alarmed at the speed of blood, swabs iodine, sobbing:
"Hell of a note!"

Encircling our Coney shore the waded oceans
Loiter and loot.
And out of sky, abrupt on a pleasant evening,
The riddled airmen chute.
Through autumn of blood advances the lonely hunter
With brutal boot.

The dunce world, capped with day, with darkness belted,
Is to this college brought,
To learn:
Love is, or it isn't love, and what is?
Mind errs and flesh is flogged. Passion is taught
To built igloos of the icy cubes of concept,
Ergo and ought.

We, nauseaed, leap to land from the reeling scupper;
Love sun, being bred of night;
Endure
Our inky earth blocked out from a somewhere planet
How terrible-bright.
Who shall know as we, we duped, the genuine Ellis,
Island of light?

THOMAS MANN:

Israel Stands Before Pharaoh

Translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter

Should anyone ask why Jacob, the man of years and stateliness, was not the first to be received in audience by Pharaoh, instead of the brothers, as we are told was the case, the answer is: for the sake of heightening the interest. In the ordering of any festal occasion, the best feature is seldom put first. It begins as a rule with some minor attraction, then comes something a bit better, and only at the end does true excellence and honour come swaying up, while the crescendo of applause and shouting rises to its climax. That is an old dispute, the struggle for precedence; but from the ceremonial point of view it was always an idle one. The poorer attraction has always the *pas*; when it insists, its betters will always give way with a smile.

Furthermore, the audience with the brothers had something practical in view, it was a business appointment, with a certain matter to discuss and settle; whereas Jacob's presentation to the young god was merely a graceful formality, with so little content indeed that Pharaoh was gravelled for lack of subject-matter and hit on nothing better than to ask the patriarch how old he was. His talk with the sons had more sense; on the other hand, it was quite stereotyped, being like all the King's audiences arranged beforehand by his ministers.

The five brothers were ushered by the mincing chamberlain into the council and audience chamber; young Pharaoh sat there surrounded by a ring of standing palace officials. He bore the crook, the scourge and a life-symbol and sat under a beribboned baldachin, on a carved chair of the ancient and traditional uncomfortableness; yet he somehow contrived to relax and sit at ease in it, for he did not approve of the hieratic posture of the limbs, the stiffness of which he felt was out of harmony with the lovely naturalness of his god. His first mouthpiece, the Lord of the Bread, Djepnuteefonech, the Provider, stood at the right fore-post and saw to it that the interview, which was conducted through an interpreter, ran off according to plan.

The newcomers duly brought their foreheads into contact with the pavement of the hall; then they mumbled a paean of adulation, not too long a one, having been drilled by Joseph, who had so composed it that it answered the court requirements without offending their own beliefs. It was not translated, being a mere introductory flourish; Pharaoh thanked them for it at once, in his shy treble, and added that his majesty was sincerely glad to welcome before his throne the worthy relatives of his true shadow-dispenser and uncle. "What is your occupation?" he next enquired.

It was Judah who answered, saying that they were shepherds, both they and also their fathers, and they understood every sort of cattle-breeding from the ground up. They had come hither to this country because there was no longer pasture for their flocks, the famine being sore in the land of Canaan. If they might venture a request before Pharaoh's countenance, it was this: that they might dwell in the land of Goshen, where they had for the time pitched their tents.

Ikhnaton's sensitive face betrayed a faint distaste when the interpreter pronounced the word for shepherd. He turned to Joseph, with the prescribed words: "Your kin have come unto you. The land of Egypt is before you and before them; in the best of the land make your father and your brethren dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell, it will be very pleasant to my majesty." Joseph prompted him by a glance, and he added: "My father in Heaven has also given my majesty an idea which the heart of Pharaoh rejoices in: you, my friend, know your brothers and their activities better than anyone else; you shall set them according to their activities over my flocks and make them rulers over my cattle. My majesty graciously and cordially commands that the indentures be written out. I have been very much gratified."

And next it was Jacob's turn.

His entrance was most stately and labouring. He deliberately exaggerated his age and infirmities, that they might weigh down the balance against any Nimrod impressiveness and strengthen his god not to give ground. He was perfectly aware that his courtier son was uneasy lest the father behave with condescension to Pharaoh, or begin talking about the ram Bindidi; with filial concern he had explicitly warned him against it. Jacob had no idea of doing so; on the other hand he was determined to give no ground, and so set up as a defense this overpowering impression of great age. He had been dispensed from any genuflexions, being presumably too stiff; and also it had been decided to make the audience very brief to spare the old man long standing.

They looked at each other for a while in silence: the luxurious young modern and dreamer of dreams about God, curiously rising a little out of his gilt and adorned little box and his over-easy posture—and Jizchak's son, the father of twelve. They looked at each other, all lapped together as they were in this single hour, yet ages apart; the sickly boy, heir to an immemorial crown, striving with his feeble might to distill from millennial accumulations of religious thought, the attar of a tender and sentimental religion of love; and the wise, experienced old man, whose position in time was at the very source and fount of widely developing being. Pharaoh soon became embarrassed. He was used to beginning with the greeting hymn, according to protocol, and not to addressing the person who stood before him. But neither, we are told, was Jacob wholly unmindful of the opening formula; for on entering as on leaving he solemnly "blessed" Pharaoh. This must be taken quite literally: the patriarch substituted the blessing for the routine jingle of adulation; not lifting both hands,

as he always did before his God, but only the right, stretching it straight out towards Pharaoh—it shook in the most impressive manner as he did it—as though from this distance he was putting a fatherly hand upon the young man's head.

"May the Lord bless you, King over Egypt," he said, in the voice of advanced old age.

Pharaoh was greatly impressed.

"And how old might you be, little Grandfather?" he enquired in amazement.

And here again Jacob exaggerated. We are told that he reckoned his age at a hundred and thirty years—an entirely arbitrary figure, for in the first place he did not know with an exactness; even today, in his part of the world, people are not very clear on the point of age. And aside from that, we know that he was to live a hundred and six years in all, an age within the bounds of the possible if close to its extreme limit. And according to this reckoning, he had by now not yet reached ninety, though very well preserved for so considerable an age. But the question gave him a chance to clothe himself in the uttermost solemnity before Pharaoh. His gesture was that of a blind prophet, his speech deliberately measured. "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years," he said, and added, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

Pharaoh shuddered. He was destined to die young, and his sensitive nature was attuned to the idea; so that the mere thought of all that life seemed to horrify him.

"Ye Heavenly powers!" said he, in something like alarm. "And have you always lived at Hebron, little Grandfather, in the wretched Retenu?"

"Mostly, my child," answered Jacob, so that it went through the pleated one at the side of the canopy like a stroke, and Joseph shook his head warningly at his father. Jacob saw him, but pretended not to see. Obstinately continuing to bear down with all the oppressive evidence of age, he added:

"Two thousand and three hundred, according to the wise men, are the years of Hebron, and even Mempi, the city of tombs, does not go back so far."

Again Joseph hastily shook his head, but the old man paid not the least heed, and Pharaoh behaved with great compliance.

"It may be so, Grandfather, it may be so," he hastened to say. "But how can you call your lifetime evil when you begot a son whom Pharaoh loves as the apple of his eye, so that none is greater in the two lands save only the lord of the double crown?"

"I begot twelve sons," answered Jacob, "and he was one of their number. Among them is cursing as well as blessing and blessing as well as cursing. Some have been rejected and remain the chosen. But as one has been chosen, he remains rejected in love. As I lost him, so should I

find him; and as I found him, so was he lost to me. Upon a pedestal was he lifted up, and withdrew from among the number of those I begot; but in his stead there come in those whom he raised up to me, before the one the other."

Pharaoh listened with his mouth open to these sibylline remarks which had become even more obscure by the time the interpreter finished with them. He looked imploringly at Joseph, but the latter kept his eyes cast down.

"Yes, yes," said he. "Of course, little Grandfather, that is quite clear. Well and wisely said, as Pharaoh loves to have it. But now you must not tire yourself longer with standing before my majesty. Go in peace, and live, so long as you have joy of it, years without number added to your hundred and thirty!"

And Jacob blessed Pharaoh again with lifted hand, and then, having given ground by not even the thickness of a hair, he went hence out of his presence, with the same majestic formality and the same labouring gait as before.

MORTON FINEMAN:

The Wrestler

Outside, in the dark empty countryside, between him and the clustered houses of the village, the rain was falling with a smooth cool silence, and out of it, like a bloom, at the far end of the village, was the neon sign spelling BEER, shining with a fuzzy brilliance. Every night since he'd come to Mrs. Blessinghame's boarding house here in Bucks County Christopher had looked at that sign through the rain, from the window of his room. The first couple of nights it had all seemed very simple. He was going to relax, ease his muscles, eat a lot, listen to the radio, and sit in the sunshine and watch the land turn green. So far he had hardly thought of the rain. He was here to get well again, and the very simplicity of it had made him feel as happy as though it were already accomplished. When he was better he would get a job. His days in the ring were over, that he was sure of. He would become a salesman, or work in an office, and maybe he would find a girl and fall in love and get married and move to Brooklyn, and live the rest of his life in a small house and go to baseball games on Saturday afternoons, and once or twice a week he would bowl maybe. But no more of the ring. The little neon sign had been a reminder of what his life might be if he got well and stopped worrying. But seven days of the rain had finally got him. He was past thirty, washed up. He was growing paunchy. He was sick. The bitter knowledge of these things, the old melancholy, the driving regret, returned.

Gus, the bartender, was talking to some one on the wall phone when Christopher walked in and sat down at one of the wooden stools in front of the short bar, unbuttoned his raincoat, waited. He was a short dark man with a torso like an oil drum. The selection of whiskies on the shelf was not large, but there was plenty to get drunk on, and just thinking of whisky, and forgetting the rain and the wet soggy countryside and Mrs. Blessinghame and all of Bucks County made him happy again. A picture of a pretty woman was standing on the shelf between two bottles of Old Overholt, and Christopher looked at it and waited for the bartender to finish talking on the phone.

"No, honest to God, Stacy, he didn't come and he didn't call up," he heard the bartender saying. "Certainly he's got the number. All right, if he calls up I'll tell him you are playing the piano for the square dance tonight and you'll meet him here. All right, Stacy," he said patiently. "No, honest, I won't forget what you told me. All right, Stacy, goodbye." Gus hung up, looked briefly at Christopher, and walked behind the short bar.

He was a tall man with hollow cheeks and eyes that looked out from under their sandy eyebrows with an air of omniscience, doubt, and scorn. His dirty apron funnelled out on his chest. He stared at Christopher without smiling.

"You live around here?" he asked.

"No," Christopher said. "I'm here on vacation. Could I have a double Old Overholt with a little water?"

Gus got the bottle down and placed a glass beside it. "Help yourself. I'll be the scorekeeper."

He watched Christopher drink two doubles straight, then sip a little water. "You remind me of somebody I saw one time," Gus said.

"I used to be a wrestler," Christopher said. "Maybe you saw me. Do you ever go to the wrestling matches?"

"Every Friday night, in Convention Hall, in Camden."

"I was there four times. I won every time," Christopher said.

"I can't afford to go there any more," Gus said. "Ever since I bought this place, I can't afford to do anything but sit here and read the paper. In my day I saw everybody that amounted to anything in the wrestling game, but now I don't do anything." He eased down on his elbows on the bar. "I used to go up to Philadelphia to the old Bijou on Eighth Street," he said. "They had girls there," he said, quietly. "They were the most beautiful girls I've ever seen. I'll never forget how those girls looked. Every one was big and proud and walked like a princess."

By the time Christopher had had four more drinks, Gus had taken two and the suspicion in his glance was entirely gone; his laconic unfriendliness had softened into a shy hunger for confidence; he smiled a lot. Christopher had begun to like him, and wondered why he had not come here sooner instead of sitting in his room and watching the rain and listening to Mrs. Blessinghame.

"A rest," Christopher said. "Gus, the doctor told me I should come out to the country for a rest."

"Where are you from?"

"New York. A beautiful city, where it never rains for seven days running; where you can go to a movie when it does rain."

"They are having a big square dance at the Social Hall," Gus said.

"I know," Christopher said. "Why don't you go?"

"I'd rather go to a burlesque show and watch the beautiful girls," Gus said.

"Why do you have to talk about beautiful girls in a place like this?" Christopher asked. "Why do you have to remind me of such things?"

"Listen," Gus told him, "a man whose wife has left him for a man who writes detective stories has a right to talk about beautiful girls. I've got varicose veins from standing on my feet all night working like a slave and she runs away with a writer of detective stories."

Christopher stared at him carefully, and he understood. Both men drank with a quiet sympathy, their quest for happiness and ease stilled

for the moment by the warmth of the whiskey, the silence, and the knowledge of each other's pain. Each of them understood that there were knots of longing in the other hidden away too deep and tied too tight ever to be undone.

"I am going to show you something I am prouder of than anything I own," Gus told him. He opened a drawer and took out a framed and autographed picture and gave it to Christopher. "One of the greatest wrestlers that ever lived," he said. "Jim Londos. Read that autograph." He read it aloud for Christopher, "'To a lover of the art. Sincerely, Jim Londos.' He gave that to me himself," Gus said. "It was the only moment of real happiness in my life. He gave it to me and invited me to have a drink."

Christopher held the picture between his hands and looked at it. This was the one thing Gus should not have done. He looked at Gus with hard antagonism.

"So you think Jim Londos was the greatest wrestler in the world, huh?"

"Absolutely," Gus declared.

"Haah," Christopher cried, "I am a better wrestler than Londos ever was, right now."

"You," Gus said, "to me right now, and pardon the expression, you look like a plain ordinary fat man."

Christopher was staring moodily at the picture of Jim Londos posed in tights and advancing on the world with a dark handsome grim lethality. "I don't have to come to Bucks County to be insulted," Christopher said. He put down the picture. "Let me tell you something. I could have been the world's heavyweight wrestling champion. Did you ever hear of the death hold? I invented it."

"Ha," Gus declared triumphantly, "that was Chief Little Wolf."

Christopher sneered with passionate derision. "Five years before anybody ever heard of Chief Little Wolf I was using the death hold on my opponents. I had legs like oak trees and arms like bars of steel and I moved like a panther in the ring."

Gus folded his arms and looked disbelievingly at Christopher's tragic and impassioned face. "You were not a better wrestler than Jim Londos," he stated. "Jim Londos was the finest wrestler that ever stepped into the ring."

"That Greek," Christopher shrugged his shoulders angrily. "Like that I could have handled him." He snapped his fingers. "I was a panther in the ring." He looked away from Gus, and said quietly, "I was a great and terrible panther."

He got up and walked over to the window and stood by it, staring into the darkness and the rain, meditating gloomily; and all the shattered dignity mankind had ever endured seemed to rise in him. He walked back to the bar and sat down. "The hell with you," he told Gus. "Why should I let you eat my heart out? In a place like this, where Humphrey Bogart would not even get shot, my cup has been filled with gall."

"Listen," Gus said, trying to mollify him. "There was nothing personal. It is only a matter of opinion. As a wrestler and a man I have the greatest respect for you. I am the kind of a man who has only the greatest respect for human dignity." He spoke in great earnest. "But I must stick to my principles."

His eyes had become pools in which all humiliations lingered like shadows. "I have a right," he declared fervently, "to believe that Jim Londos is the greatest wrestler in the world."

Stacy's gabardine raincoat was soaked when she came in. The bandanna around her head had not prevented the rain from soaking her fine blonde hair. It was heavy and ragged looking. She was a large woman with large breasts and light-colored nervous eyes and long slender hands that kept moving quickly and tragically. She stood there for a second holding her wet handbag to her right breast, and looked at Gus and Christopher. Then she walked quickly across the room to the bar. "Did he come?" she asked Gus. "What time is it?" She unbuttoned her gabardine coat. Her face was haggard and passionate and uncertain.

"It's a quarter after ten," Christopher said to her.

She bowed her head hurriedly in acknowledgment and walked over to the vending machine and got a pack of cigarettes, then lit one and walked over to the phone and dialed, her wet coat trailing drops of rain over the floor. Christopher turned to watch her. She was built, he thought, surveying the solid proportions of her body, like a strip-tease artist, but there was a tautness, a nervousness that made her seem gaunt. She was moving with restrained impatience from foot to foot. Then she hung up and strode back to the bar and sat down, pointedly ignoring Christopher as though she was perfectly aware of his appreciative glance and would vouchsafe that privilege only if he dared not address her.

"Tell me something, Gus," she said bitterly. "Why do I have to eat my heart out all the time? Why does it have to be me all the time? Why can't I get a little satisfaction out of this goddamned life, just for one night?"

Gus poured her a drink and she drank it quickly. "All I want out of this goddamned life is a little satisfaction," she said. "The son-of-a-bitch, I told him to be here by ten o'clock."

"Maybe he got stuck out on the road," Gus said tenderly.

Christopher could see that Gus was fond of her by the gentle way he spoke to her, and the unobtrusive way he filled her glass just at the right moment.

She looked at herself in the mirror over the bar. "God," she said, "look at me. In a couple of more years I'll look like fifty."

Christopher poured himself two more drinks from the bottle of Old Overholt. Suddenly he realized he was very drunk. "Excuse me," he said to Stacy, "could I buy you a drink?"

She did not answer him.

"I said," Christopher repeated, "I would like to buy you a drink."

She swung around, letting her long haughty legs pass before him. "I am not the kind of woman who drinks with strange men; and if I were that kind of woman I would not have to choose some one like you."

Gus filled the awkward moment. "How was the square dance, Stacy?"

"For someone like me it was lousy; but for my brother it was fine."

"How is Claude?" Gus asked.

"How is Claude?" she repeated, bitterly. "He is still seven different kinds of bastard. You will pardon my language," she said formally to Christopher, "but after all this does not concern you." She finished the drink Gus had placed in front of her.

She spoke, Christopher thought, beautifully, intensely; she spoke like Bette Davis.

"Do me a favor?" he asked Gus. "Introduce me to your friend."

"His name is Christopher," Gus told Stacy, "he is staying in Bucks County for a rest."

"How do you do," Christopher said to her.

"How do you do," she answered haughtily. "I don't know yet whether I am glad to know you."

"I would like to buy you a drink," Christopher said eagerly.

Stacy shook her head. "I'm sorry," she said, "our acquaintance is too slight. Perhaps later on."

Words to answer her would not come; they lay in his chest like hot coals. He got up and walked over to the window. He could hear her talking with Gus. When he heard her voice with its throaty pride and arrogance, with its intimations of passions and secret sorrows and lonely melancholy, the knife edge of his own frustration drove deeply into him. He stared at the falling rain.

"I have Bach in my soul," he heard her say, "and I have to play over and over again . . . do you know what? . . . A Toast To Good King Gustavus." He saw her drink several whiskies in a row and his mood began to match hers. The fierce beauty of her voice swept into him.

"He even took away my cigarettes," she was telling Gus. "He said I couldn't smoke because of the children. He made me come in an hour early and I had to sit there in the cold while he made a fire. I froze. I told him I was freezing. His own sister!"

For Christopher the beauty of her voice filled the little room. He looked at her through blurred and humble eyes, and walked back to the bar, to the bottle of Old Overholt, close to her, within the radiation of her passion. It was as if he were holding her against him, feeling the proud beat of her heart. He trembled. Any man, he thought, could die for such a woman. Here, even here, he thought, even in this worn unpainted forgotten taproom in the middle of Bucks County where the intellectuals and Republicans came to die like elephants in the sun.

He watched her sway across to the phone, her eyes flashing imperiously. When she came back, her call unanswered, she continued to reject his

presence, as though the simple act of considering him alive would contaminate the hot purity of her mood.

"I," she said proudly, "have to play the piano at a square dance. I have to be in love with a truck driver who never comes to see me when I want him."

Christopher struggled for the courage to speak to her. Half an hour later she was still talking. "A goddamned son-of-a-bitch of a truck driver named Chubb," she cried as she flowed back from the phone to her seat. "I want a man to put his arms around me and stay with me. I want a man to read poetry to me. And the goddamned phone doesn't answer. You," she shouted at Christopher. "Don't stare at me. Go someplace else."

Christopher's large deep eyes were aglow with love and frustration and compassion, for the world, for Gus, and for this strange and stormy woman with the magic voice. He wanted to talk, but he choked up.

"Why do I have to eat my heart out?" Stacy cried with magnificent entreaty, crossing her beautiful legs. "Life is a goddamned cradle of despair."

She caught Christopher staring at her. "What are you looking at?" she asked. "What do you want?" She turned to Gus before Christopher could answer. "Do you know what my son-of-a-bitch brother is doing?" Stacy asked. Her deep voice was now wild and thunderous. "He is showing his muscles. He is standing there in the middle of the room showing his muscles like Charles Atlas and challenging people to wrestle him. And nobody can beat him." She spoke blackly. "He beat three people before I could sneak away. He devours them like a python."

Christopher leaned forward. "Excuse me," he said falteringly.

Stacy lifted her head and stared at him. "Yes?" she demanded. "Yes?"

The antagonism in her eyes made Christopher shake his head sadly. "Please don't be prejudiced against me."

"All right," Stacy said. She swayed to and fro on her seat. "I won't be prejudiced against you."

Christopher looked seriously at her, then began. "I heard you say that your brother was wrestling people at the square dance. I could not help overhearing it," he said apologetically. "I was not eavesdropping." Stacy waved him on, with a slow gesture of forgiveness and compassion that made his heart leap. "I would like to help you," Christopher went on. "I have done a little wrestling in my time. I could, if you would allow me, beat your brother for you."

"I would like to put my brother into a cement mixer personally and then have a brass band playing as he came out the other end," Stacy said.

"With your permission," Christopher said eagerly, "I would like to wrestle him."

"He would destroy you," Stacy said, her voice rich now with kindness and understanding. "When it comes to wrestling he is not a man. He is a rock-crushing machine."

Christopher looked at her passionately. "Never in my life have I ever wanted to do something like I want to do this. For a strange and beautiful woman who has treated me like dirt under her feet all night and who eats her heart out for a truck driver." He looked at Gus, who stood bent forward behind the bar, looking at both of them. "All I ask is a chance. Do me a favor?" he asked Gus. "Tell her what a great and terrible panther I was in the ring."

"Next to Jim Londos," Gus said, "Christopher is the best wrestler in the world. You can take my word for it, Stacy. I am a student of the art."

Stacy rocked back and forth on the stool, and the look of grief went out of her face, and suddenly she began to cry and she flung her arms around Christopher and kissed him. He closed his eyes and trembled from the warmth of her.

"All my life," Stacy cried, "I've wanted a man who would do something for me, a man who would sleep with me all night, keep me in his arms, a man who would keep his appointments with me, and answer the telephone when I called him."

Out of the deep recesses of Christopher's embittered existence; from the pathos of his mediocriy; from his lost illusion; from his loneliness and his yearning for greatness; from his longing for union with another and for peace, a strange emotion rose.

"I would wrestle anybody in the world for you," he whispered.

"You beautiful man," Stacy sobbed. "Oh, you beautiful man."

She sobbed, and flung her arms out to him again, humbled, tender, full of love, and then they walked toward the door and into the rain to the Social Hall where Claude, the rock-crushing machine, was devouring challengers. The cold spring rain was still falling, blurring the neon sign of the taproom where Gus was sitting alone now, reading the paper, and eating his heart out for the woman who ran away, and yet glad for Stacy and for Christopher. They walked with their arms around each other tightly, to the brightly lit Social Hall, smiling at each other, kissing blindly, drunken and peaceful, in the rain.

WALLACE FOWLIE:

Petrouchka's Wake

Only a straw-stuffed puppet, this modern hero! His soul is so tiny that we might almost say he has no soul at all. The flat bright colors of his costume are the simple basic passions which he has learned by rote and which he typifies under the white grease paint. But his mouth is human in its tortured line and his eyes have at times the light of all of man's prayers and loves. Human in his final convulsions and in his death he appears only as a caricature of man in his life, an hallucinated clown whose jerkiness and animation depict the comic of passions. The crowd must forget the tragedy of passions. He is the will of the crowd. He is the tawdry projection of the crowd's willful flight from reality. He is the soul of the crowd when it has no courage and no heroism. Petrouchka is the reminiscence of what was human.

Yet the passion of all past heroes is in the puppet. Petrouchka is in love. Within the sawdust of his awkward body, there is a grain of life which has all the swelling recklessness and all the trembling blindness of Antony and Othello. Love can change a man into a clown and change a clown into a man. Modern literature no longer contemplates the great principle of love in a hero of stature and vigor. As though he were engaged in some laboratory experiment, the creative artist has grafted this principle of love on innocent and helpless replicas of man. Petrouchka's white face against the black walls of his cell shows up clearly. Art is an experiment taking place under a steady flood light. The hero-clown is exhibited, even in his cell and in his solitude, and appears as visible as if he were tied on an operating table. The greatness of his figure has vanished, but the unity of his being is still the same. The divine in him, which is the force of his love, beats against the sawdust walls of his limp body as he beats against the fictitious cardboard walls of his cell. For there is no greatness, no dignity in his world: the planks he parades on are barely nailed together and the rope which pulls the faded stage curtain seems to break at each night stand. Integrated, pure, tragic, his love for the insipid ballerina dominates the show, melts the grease paint, releases his spirit in its dance before the ideal.

For Plato, a man's love is his search for himself. Without much juggling of terms, this definition can apply to divine love because the self which is sought is that pure part of being, between which being and God there is no obstacle. The clown traffics with the childlike part of himself. When a child desires an object, no amount of reasoning or logic can turn him from his desire. Pierrot, Pinocchio, Petrouchka belong to the race

of children who die before their desire is realized. Their fate is a mock tragedy because they have no sense of shame at their plight. Children and clowns never realize that their plight is universal and shared: they are the innocent scapegoats of all the adult and bourgeois spectators who watch, half-amused, half-puzzled, in the antics and incarnations of the clown and the child the projection of their own undivulged desires.

And love in the puppet—like love in the prophet, who is still another specimen of the abandoned scapegoat—grows into tragic intensity. Petrouchka's love is the pure symbol of tragedy: rapid, powerful, crushing. His first movements are as futile as the first words of Phèdre. He is already, at the beginning of each performance, in the domain of death. His daily ritual is a flight from a vocation of mimicry and humor into a personal experience of love. There he lives as he had never lived in his showman's trade, and there he dies because of his infidelity to the lesser life.

The contemporary painters realized the clown's tragedy and its deception of the hero. As all women were in the painted Virgin of the Italian Renaissance, so all men are in the painted clown of modern France. Cézanne, Rouault, Picasso have recreated all the poses of Petrouchka. He lives also in the *Pitre Châtié* of Mallarmé and in the *Orphée* of Cocteau. As in the ballet of Stravinsky and Fokine, Mallarmé's clown makes a hole in his tent and escapes into the world of love where he is struck down with a bolt from heaven. Petrouchka is related to the children of the sun and the race of Phèdre because his love consumes him in its frenzy. If Phèdre has beauty and grace, her desire is depicted as monstrous and grotesque; but the very purity of Petrouchka's desire is deformed by his unnatural body and the exaggerated traits of his countenance.

Modern poetry is a world familiar with the spiritual struggle of Petrouchka. In fact, the poet at all times is not unlike the clown. He is the type of man to whom the French word "chétif" applies. When the poet is not performing as poet, it may well be that he is collapsing or dying somewhere. Mallarmé's faun is comparable to the poet whose experience is never realized, whose experience is never joy. In Hart Crane's "Southern Cross," the chétif poet wants the "nameless Woman of the South": his tragedy is that of loving what is impossible and unreal, as Petrouchka's is that of loving what is inferior and unresponsive. The theme of innocency and "childhood havens" in Ben Belitt's verse is a statement not of love or tragedy, but of a spiritual fervor akin to Petrouchka's fervor and "faint heart" and abiding oneness. In the recently published *Lincoln Lyrics* of John Malcolm Brinnin, we read a poet struck with the choreographic gauntness and "graceless strength" of a hero possessing none of the traditional heroic glamor. The space and site of Lincoln's childhood were not epic-marked, but "acorn-punctuated." His love was a "Song of Songs on Illinois."

The contemporary poet, if he is not Petrouchka himself, sees what is tragic and eternal in Petrouchka. If the poet is not inhabiting the very heart of despair, as Petrouchka and Hart Crane were, he is concerned with the preparation for that despair which he discovers in what Saint Augustine would have called the world of his universal memory. In a spiritual sense, then, the poet is the clown either because of the total and hysteric absorption of himself in the object loved, or because of his waiting in the mythic part of a world which the rest of the world contemplates with feelings of recognition and amusement and remoteness.

Characters in prose fiction, and some of the most striking in recent times, bear traits of Petrouchka and traces of his agony. In Flaubert's *Un Coeur Simple,* Félicité is a counterpart of the puppet. She loved instinctively and without hope the persons nearest to her until they all died and she was left with the symbol of frustration: the stuffed parrot. In this caricature of affection, both hideous and pathetic, there is the enactment of a clown's strategy. When Petrouchka is killed by the moor's scimitar, his body turns out to be only a straw-stuffed figure, and when Félicité is dying, her ultimate vision of reality is the wide-spread wings of her parrot mounting heavenward. These are the heroes who loved what didn't exist and who died embracing the air.

Such frustration as Félicité's is not reserved solely for the simple in heart. Aschenbach, in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice,* is the intellectual and artist whose insensate love for the young boy Tadzio has in it the same mockery and unreality as Petrouchka's love has. A great human passion lodged in a puppet's body is as tragic as the love of a mature artist for a young boy to whom he can never speak. Both are tragic because of their ludicrous unreality. The puppet, the servant girl, and the artist represent three levels of existence in which the same tragedy of disproportion occurs. Petrouchka's dance and rhythmic contortions, Félicité's stuffed parrot, which is a kind of a relic of her dead love, and Aschenbach's fever-infested Venice, where he continues to live with Tadzio and death until his real death comes, are the symbols of what has happened to each one; and in each case, it is the symbol of the irremediable.

Even in stories published last year, Petrouchka's ghost continues to dictate to his new children the awkward passion of loneliness. "A Memory" in Eudora Welty's book, *A Curtain of Green,* with the delicacy and suggestiveness of a woman's skill in writing, recalls the incident in a young girl's life of a certain morning when she touched her friend's wrist as they passed on the stairs in school. Later, on a beach where she is watching the crude playfulness of a family, she tries to live in her memory of love and in all its pitiful singleness of gesture. The man in the family group pours sand inside his wife's bathing suit between her breasts, and when she stands up "the lumps of mashed and folded sand came emptying out . . . as though her breasts themselves had turned to sand."

The image has the same mixture of horror and grotesqueness and comedy as Petrouchka's dance; and there is the same unreality of the exterior world and the acute prolonged reality of the timid heart.

Petrouchka's wake is attended by a vast company. The modern artist has seized upon the dual body of the puppet: the limp straw body stretched out on the market place, and the writhing body of the spirit as it appears over the tent at the end of the ballet. He has recast the dualism of Greek and Judeo-Christian in the quiescent deathlike Petrouchka and the violent energizing Petrouchka. The ancient problem of appearance and reality is the rapid life story of the puppet. His garb is the clown's and his grease paint is the performer's, but his destiny is suffering and death.

The greatest of all Petrouchkas is James Joyce's Earwicker. Flaccid and melting, half conscious and half asleep, H. C. Earwicker, who is the comic and tragic of all men, both participates in and watches a long procession of eidolons. Shadows of himself and of all men parade in cinematographic ease through his sleeplessness. Their focal point is love and the nightly seizure of passion. Earwicker lies beside his wife in bed, but a world of time and change is between them. His mind moves out of his body, as Petrouchka's spirit abandoned his punctured straw corpse, and wanders to another bed where his sons sleep. The old man is the young man; the puppet is the lover; the prince is the pumpkin: "I thought you were all glittering with the noblest of carriage. You're only a bumpkin."

The first ballet on the program might easily be *Giselle*: classic, simple, natural, where the hero loves the heroine and she loves him. But *Petrouchka,* which ends the program, is the modern distortion. The tragedy of *Giselle* is a fairy story, and the fairy story of *Petrouchka* is a tragedy.

AMONG RECENT BOOKS:

NORMAN HOLMES PEARSON:

MATTHEW JOSEPHSON: *Victor Hugo.* Doubleday, Doran.

MURIEL RUKEYSER: *Willard Gibbs.* Doubleday, Doran.

Victor Hugo: writing for millions, thundering to legislative bodies, his carriage drawn in triumph by the people of Paris after his return from political exile, amorous, in and out of luck but never out of the public eye. Willard Gibbs: his handful of scientific books read only by a few and understood by fewer, reserved and silent even in college faculty meetings, a bachelor living secluded in his family home, scarcely known even to the people of New Haven except for the brief glimpses caught as he drove his sisters by Mill Rock and Lake Whitney.

Though the two men are dissimilar enough in terms of direct relationship to their social worlds, they are in our terms in many ways alike, each with significant influence upon the lives of others. Hugo's impact was chiefly upon his immediate age in the creation of the Third Republic, both in fact by political endeavor and in spirit by his writings. Gibbs's influence extended as positively, but more retarded and indirectly, by the impact of sciences dependent upon his discoveries. That Gibbs should have lived almost his entire life within the boundaries of a few square rods, going to grammar school across one street corner, to college in the neighboring block, and to teach there for the rest of his life, in no way circumscribed by the

narrowness of his living the expanding circle of his theorems. The United States has had perhaps only two truly great speculative minds: Jonathan Edwards and Willard Gibbs. Edwards is well known, though not necessarily for the right reasons; Gibbs is being introduced to most by Miss Rukeyser's biography.

Nor is it sheer fancy to think of Gibbs, like Hugo, as a poet. It was Gibbs's father who remarked that language is a science, and Gibbs himself who turned the expression by his statement that mathematics is a language. Gibbs and Hugo were both inevitably concerned with problems of communication and imagination. The resolved equation is like the fully achieved and resolved poem. If this may seem only a half-truth to those rebels against the observations on Euclid of Miss Millay's Vassar days, it is hardly so to those who recognize the identity of higher mathematics and philosophy, and their necessity for symbolic representation.

It is interesting to see how frequently such poetic values of mathematics can be misunderstood. Joseph Wood Krutch, reviewing *Willard Gibbs* in *The Nation,* remarked that a "climax of absurdity" was reached in a chapter "in which by implication at least, we seem to be asked to see the relation between the second law of thermodynamics and the White Whale." Hugo, so long concerned with the power of evil and increasingly a symbolist, would have understood Melville's and Gibbs's concern with the representation of energy and their attempts to harness it by endowment with symbolic equivalents.

Mr. Josephson is not obtuse in this regard. *Les Miserables* develops in his biography as a study of the social forces with which Hugo came to grips during his life, and as a book in which the revolution of the working classes is given an essentially mythical structure.

So much for similarity. The significant difference between the two biographies is not so usefully clarified by a discussion of the comparative excellence of their prose styles—each certainly has its limitations—as by an indication of the formal results of the disparity of factual material with which the biographers worked. Hugo's life is documented at every step, not only by Hugo himself, whose journals are voluminous, but by countless watchdogs and lapdogs who followed his every move. It would be no exaggeration to say there is overdocumentation. Even Mr. Josephson's obviously imposed restraint does not keep his pages free of clutter in personal matters. So much is perhaps the inevitable result of attempting a description of one who was everywhere and mixed in everything. It may be said too that Hugo's literary work, which is after all what we are now most interested in, receives rather less than its due emphasis, particularly in the discussion of those remarkable later verses which come in the course of Hugo's living and its relating at a time when both biographer and reader are wearying. But this is not to deny the quality of Mr. Josephson's meticulous study which is in its encompassing of so much an achievement in terms of orthodox biography.

The unusual quality and particular contribution of Miss Rukeyser's work follows from almost precisely opposite conditions of material relating to the life of her subject. Gibbs himself, possibly the members of his family, and certainly his contemporaries, hardly considered documentation necessary. One can only guess at the worth in which he was regarded by them. Miss Rukeyser has had to content herself with such scraps of information as floated about in occasional remarks, brief notices, and random memories. Even such scanty papers as the family possessed were for one reason or another withheld from her, though it is doubtful whether they would have closed the biographical lacunae now apparently forever established.

The nineteenth century had a methodological way out from such difficulties. If one did not know what a person did at such and such a time in his life, details were dug up from another in similar circumstances, and the results roughly equated as "Life and Times." In some degree Miss Rukeyser has followed a similar method. Realizing that Willard Gibbs's life was in many ways like his father's, she has taken such a relationship as pattern. Perhaps the most brilliant writing of her book is the chapter in the beginning in which she describes the "Amistad" Trial, that extraordinary and symbolic action of liberation achieved by the elder Gibbs's linguistic imagination. Given the proper documents, her biography would have been capped by an account of another voyage of potential liberation, that by Langley who sought advice from Willard Gibbs as to words of mathematics which might be open-sesames to flight. The father-and-son relationship between the Gibbses, Miss Rukeyser parallels with similar relationships in the Adams and the James families. On cultural grounds, it is not necessarily coincidence that made John Quincy Adams a pleader at the "Amistad" Trial, nor Henry, his grandson, base historical hypothesis upon the conclusions of Willard Gibbs. The analogy with the James family is considerably less dramatic, but not uninteresting.

What Miss Rukeyser has added to the genre of biography is a conversion of the "Life and Times" formula into dynamic rather than static terms. That which was seen by earlier writers of biography simply as incremental fact is now demonstrated to be more workable and useful when converted into symbol. That such conversion should be made by a poet turned biographer, and then turned back to poet again by the sheer necessity of making the most out of little, is only natural. Certainly it is the poet's function, as it is that of the philosopher and the higher mathematician, to see things not merely in their literal features but also in their connotative fullness. Miss Rukeyser has indicated that it can be the biographer's function as well.

KENNETH ANDREWS:

WILLIAM SAROYAN: *The Human Comedy.* Harcourt, Brace.

The Human Comedy will be Saroyan's most widely read book, and all Mickey Rooneydom will see the movie. Practically everybody will like this first novel, for it is difficult to dislike a book written by one who likes everybody, who is dedicated to the indisputable thesis that "the world is full of people and full of wonderful life." Saroyan's world is full of Saroyans at least, and his readers will recognize them. The McCaulays are the people usually in focus—Ulysses, who at four is stirring to all life's beautiful promise and sadness; Homer, who at fourteen is beset by most of the poignant yearnings of everybody's adolescence (ambitions primarily athletic, amatory, intellectual, and humanitarian) and is oppressed by the badness and the sadness that make extreme youth lurid; Mrs. McCaulay, whom maturity and wisdom have taught to pronounce the most outrageously rose-colored and single-minded pieties in recent print. Eccentricity, warmth, goodness, poignancy, wonder, and joy surround most of the other characters—the old man who comes on Homer practising his hurdles and speaks at once of thirty-three head of lost rabbits; Mr. Grogan, the old telegraph operator who is funny and good and gets drunk and dies while taking Marcus's death from the key; Mr. Spangler, who, amazed at America, loves everybody, and is thus wise and able to convert a convenient prodigal (in the middle of a stickup) with goodness and generosity; a grocer, a school-teacher, a librarian, a sporting goods proprietor, a number of children prefigured in *My Name is Aram,* and dozens of others from the town of Saroyan, California.

The new setting for the familiar people is America at war. The new significance of the telegram is attested for those who have and those who have not been addressed by the War Department. The soldiers are not as convincing as future Saroyan soldiers may possibly be, but new at least in their clothes and vocation. But even war is softened and short of terror; when Marcus dies, his telegraphic epitaph arrives simultaneously with Tobey, who is to take his place and fill the otherwise intolerable emptiness.

Everywhere in the newness of the latest Saroyan, in the continuity of the novel form, in the people who stay around longer than usual, in the ambition of the project, in the recognition of war-change, are the familiar pastel emotions, which you may respond to or not, according to your mood. I found some chapters lovely, some impossible—the book as a whole justified by its occasional clairvoyant and delightful observation, by its renewal of both the freshness and the pleasantness of what Saroyan offers.

HARRY SLOCHOWER:

STEFAN GEORGE: *Poems.* Rendered into English by Carol North Valhope and Ernest Morwitz. Pantheon Books.

In his "circle," Stefan George has the repute of a modern Dante. The legend has been induced, in part, by George's detached, Olympian bearing, by his monastic withdrawal into an "austere and solitary realm," in short, by an attitude of uncommonness which extended to his choice of theme, typography and orthography. He is, indeed, one of the most unapproachable of German poets, and despite his vogue, has hitherto found almost no English translators. He combines a "distant" subject matter of Oriental-Latin-Hellenic mythology with a "pure" esthetic form. In perhaps no other German poet is the technical manipulation, the use of the plastic and aural metaphor so nearly identical with the object or idea to be expressed. Add to his deployment of uncommon (Middle High German) words, and of ordinary words pointed towards their original, root-connotations, the play on vowel changes and color patterns (often within the same line), and we have a form as difficult to approach as was the person of the poet itself. The whole suggests an elegantly cold marble statue: utmost compression and inflexible firmness. To be sure, the anthropomorphic metaphors of George's later poetry aimed to interweave the themes of Beauty and Greatness, the How with the What. But the formal attitude clearly rules over the human argument, with rarely a glint of humor or of relaxedness softening the austere solemnity. George constantly checks the emotional current, as though in fear of public exposure. His unbending pronouncements are at the other pole of Dehmel's and Rilke's unbinding pleadings, and his reserved Apollonianism stands in contrast to Nietzsche's effervescent Dionysianism. All this carries over into the content which is restricted to apocalpytic pointings from afar leaving the objective reference often vague.

The present volume (together with the Péguy translation, the first publications in this country of Kurt Wolff, one of the more progressive publishers in pre-Hitler Germany) is the first large representation of George's poetry in English. The value of this beautifully gotten up book seems to us to lie in that the relatively complex English makes the "what" of George more understandable. Ernst Morwitz was a friend of "the Master" and has written a detailed analysis of his work. Whether these translations are likely to establish George's

greatness as a poet among non-German readers we are less sure. They show scholarship and technical efficiency. And they are extremely "faithful." But their pious attempt to give a close rendering of George's assonances, rhymes, alliterations, etc., often leads to forced manipulations, particularly in the simpler lyrics. An example (p. 172) will illustrate both the difficulty of the task and the questionable result in this instance:

Dies is ein lied	This is a song
Für dich allein	For none but you:
Von kindeschem wähnen	A childish ditty,
Von frommen tränen . . .	A tear of pity . . .
Durch morgengärten klingt es	Through garden-morns it quavers
Ein leichtbeschwingtes.	And lightly wavers.
Nur dir allein	For none but you,
Möcht es ein lied	Be it a song
Das rühre sein.	That renders rue.

(Where translators do not feel themselves equal to the task of recreating the poetic incantation of the original, a literal prose translation would be more serviceable.)

Although George's followers also claim him as a prophet, it is unlikely that he will be remembered for his thought. Even in Germany, his disciple, Friedrich Gundolf, has had a wider influence by his critical work on Goethe and his monumental two-volume study of Shakespeare. George's position approaches that of the New Humanists and stems from a similar anti-bourgeois persuasion. In both, we have a rejection of relativistic process thinking and of naturalistic license. George, too, lays the stress on decorum, dignity, the inner check and proclaims the Law and the principle of Leadership. These anti-liberalistic elements have led many to regard him, together with Nietzsche, as a forerunner of Nazism. But this is a travesty on both. Morwitz establishes the fact that George remained cool to the wooings of the Nazis and that he died a voluntary exile in Switzerland. What separates him and Nietzsche from the Nazis is their standard of *cultural* excellence and leadership, their anti-nationalism and anti-racism (among George's closest friends were Gundolf and Wolfskehl both Jews), and above all, their unreserved opposition to co-ordination, the keystone of Nazism. George's aristocratism led him to shrink from mass-movements ("Schon eure zahl ist frevel"), and his Catholic-Latin roots made him unsympathetic towards temporal ameliorations. For some time, even Nazi critics have ceased to claim George as a "German" poet.

PAUL LANDIS:

RICHMOND LATTIMORE: *Some Odes of Pindar* . . . in new English versions. New Directions.

Here at last is Pindar in English. For centuries we have had his name and reputation but his art has been so misconceived that we have given his name to a whole body of English poetry—for the most part out of our least lyrical period—whose only characteristics are extravagant imagery and chaotic form. Never in our translations, much less in our Pindaric imitations, has this reviewer ever glimpsed even the slightest shimmer of the glory that made him the Theban Eagle and stayed the pillage of Alexander. This situation has been particularly unfortunate because more than an ordinary facility with Greek is required of anyone who seeks to get at the poetry of Pindar through the original. His peculiar virtues—the audacity of his images and associations, the brilliant foreshortening of myths which points with lyric intensity the epic tale, the thoroughly organic form which eludes analysis—make any poetry difficult; yet here they are in English austere but fresh and idiomatic, which renders the sense generally line for line.

Pindar displays at its highest the Greek genius for stating moral platitudes poetically. Ethical generalizations crowd from his mouth like mottoes from Sancho Panza's, but in Pindar's language they are incandescent sparks from "the anvil that rings no falsehood." It is here that translations so often falter, but not this one:

> Various ways go the blasts
> of the high-flown winds. Men's prosperity will not walk far
> safe, when it fares under its own deep weight.
>
> . . . with time
> sails change as the winds die down.
>
> We are things of a day. What are we? What are we not? The shadow
> of a dream
> Is man, no more. But when the brightness comes, and God gives it
> There is a shining light on men and their life is sweet.

Space does not permit adequate illustration of the larger effects: the sweep of the rhythms, the tension and speed of such narratives as that of the Golden Fleece in the Fourth

Pythian. All we can do is pick a small bouquet from the profusion of startling, lovely phrases: "chariots at the shining breast of the sea," "at nightfall down the salt sea's bending track," "men with backs ruffled to two red wings," "the bright branches of sheer lightning broke into flame," "chariots with storm in their feet."

The rapid succession of Pindar's metaphors places upon the translator an extraordinary burden of blending audacity, faithfulness, and clarity. The slightest ambiguity of word or syntax is likely to blur the image. In a famous passage of the First Pythian we are forced back to the Greek to clear the idiom of "you will find less mockery of men that follows" and to establish the meaning of *host* in "With just tiller steer your host." Neither expression presents the slightest difficulty to anyone who has the Greek in mind, but to one, at least, who did not, both were confusing. So rare are these difficulties that to point out any is to make an error in emphasis.

This is a short book—including only the First, Third, Fourth, Eighth, and Tenth Pythian Odes—but it gives us something that never yet had been in English, and there is no literary prospect to which this reviewer looks more eagerly than to Mr. Lattimore's complete Pindar in English.

PAUL JACOB:

CHARLES PÉGUY: *Basic Verities.* Translations by Anne and Julian Green. Pantheon Books.

Basic Verities offers a good portrait of Péguy. After some "appreciations" which, though flattering to the poet, seem on this occasion quite unnecessary, an introduction written by Julian Green with exactness and ease of style presents the life, character, and writings of Péguy in a tone of admiring respect, even at times of veneration. Some thirty prose and poetry excerpts, selected, cut, and arranged with skill under separate headings (the editors' own), give the book a real unity and continuity. However true the portrait is, it remains incomplete: nothing is seen here of the changes that took place in Péguy's views, nor of his lighter aspects—brilliant, enthusiastic pages on Corneille, *Polyeucte,* Pascal, Victor Hugo, *Booz endormi.*

The qualities of Péguy are so authentically beautiful and noble that, through sheer malice, we seek one he may perhaps lack: humility. He is absolutely honest, naturally loves all true greatness, the saint's or the hero's; he has the good artisan's "honor of work"; he is a Christian with all his heart and thoughts. A good French citizen also, of the people, attached to the left revolutionary tradition, a socialist untouched by Marxist economics, he follows with passionate interest—like all Frenchmen—the events in the political life of his country. Wise and well-informed, he denounces as the cause of modern ills a movement away from mysticism which results in a "derepublicanization" and a "dechristianization" of France. Still, Christian hope forces him to believe in an ever-possible divine intervention in the troubled affairs of men—in a spiritual revolution, the only true revolution, which may suddenly change all things and make France once again healthy and happy. But if the worst happens and war comes, our good citizen immediately and joyfully becomes a good soldier. As a poet, Péguy finds his most solemn, his most human accents in the course of long colloquies with the one of his countrymen he seemed to have loved most: Joan of Arc. Later, he ventures more timidly into the contemplation of the divine. Even then, when words are to record the mystical experience and are nearest to the sublime, they retain a sort of uncannily profound, childlike simplicity.

It must, in fairness, be said that a first reading of Péguy is difficult. The prose in particular disregards cares of stylistic embellishment to the extent that artlessness becomes the identifying mark of the author. Yet, though verbal effects and eloquence as such are absent, words tyrannize over the writer and often run on where silence seems wanted. Such peculiarities made the translators' task hard, especially since they aimed at faithfulness and at extreme simplicity. They have attained that double aim. The translation is literal even to a fault. Even though incompetent in matters of English style, I sense here strangeness of diction and phrase. The few very long enumerative French sentences must have proved particularly troublesome: chopped in English, they still rock the uneasy reader rather meanly. Surprisingly, the poetry is better rendered. Even if a proof-reader's care reveals a sizeable number of imperfections—real "coquilles," omissions, misinterpretations, awkward wordings—, there is pleasure in collecting the "beaux coups" of the translators. For example, "une remontée de cinquante siècles ne le mettait point en chemin de fer que ce ne fût quelque caravane de cinquante siècles," a poser (for me), is cleverly solved in the English "A train journey for this people with fifty centuries of caravans in its memory, means a caravan journey."

Péguy, "the perfect" editor, would have been pleased by this beautiful volume, with its flawless printing (except on two pages) and with the headings, italicized and low on the page, repeating Péguy's practice. And the reader who prefers not to bother with translations will find that, except for one misprint and the occasional loss of italics, the French transcription reproduces the original with admirable accuracy.

MARION CARR:

An Anthology of Contemporary Latin-American Poetry, edited by Dudley Fitts. New Directions.

Our current diplomatic courtship of Latin-America might at first sight loom as th genesis of this anthology. But for the Hollywood-educated Pan-American, Dudley Fitts volume is still as full of surprises as a bookmaker's nightmare. Judging by its contents, th Latin-American poets of our day have faced the same world as we have, and have wreste from it some affirmative values which, beside our good-will bandwagons, look like the con sidered wisdom of the ages. This is not a book of politics, however. It is poetry. Here to the Latin-Americans have nothing to learn from their Yankee cousins. In their realizatio of the aesthetic questions of our generation, in their acceptance and adaptation of the variou experiments of the contemporary schools of poetic expression, in their invention of arrestin images, they rank among the more mature poets of our time. Some of the poems chosen fro the work of ninety-odd poets seem dull and hardly worth translating, as might be expected o so comprehensive an anthology, but the percentage of fresh, exciting verse is higher than i most anthologies.

The themes range from devotional lyrics to Marxist argument, the tone from seriouss ness to whimsy. If there has been anything new in devotional poetry for 1500 years, it is no here. A few of the love poems, however, are, even in translation, sustained lyrics—especiall Arrieta's "January Night" and Ibarbouru's "Rainy Night." Among the more striking poem of general interest—those less influenced by the "schools" and by political philosophies— are "Gulf of Mexico" by Reyes, "The Night They Kept the Vigil in the South" by Borges the nostalgic "Salute to Recife" by Bandeira, and by far the most fun of all, the whimsica Jorge de Lima poem, "The Big Mystical Circus."

Throughout the collection the imagery is challenging. Experiments with surrealism an free association have afforded new horizons of expression for even the more conventiona poets. Closely linked with wholehearted surrealism are Oquendo de Amat and Torres Bodet The more generously represented Huidobro offers a superb study of the results of experimen in free association:

> I am partly moon and partly traveling salesman
> my specialty is finding hours
> which have lost their watches.

It will be of special interest to readers to compare Huidobro's "Art of Poetry"—

> We are brawn in a cycle of nerve.
> Our brawn hangs
> like a memory, in museums—

with MacLeish's "Ars Poetica."

The poets represented are neither Fascists nor Imperialists, and it is as important tha we realize the latter as that we breathe freely at the former. Marxism is the faith of the poo litical poets. Readers of North American Marxist verse of the thirties will observe that th Latin-American Marxist wastes no time damning the bourgeois; he affirms a belief. Thi is heartening to those who have felt that the great weakness of our own social poetry of th past decade was that it was negative. Otero Silva's "Crossroads" presents the problem o personal love versus social love: the necessity to march with mankind. Regino Pedroso' "Opinions of the New Student" is a skilful treatment of the contemporary responsibility t abandon ivory tower studies for a share in the common destiny. Vallejo's "Hymn to th Volunteers of the Republic" and Neruda's "November 7" are directly resultant from partisan movements of recent years. The most intricate, the most passionate, and perhaps the mos highly poetic expression of Marxist doctrine is Pablo de Rokha's "Allegory of Torment," a sustained allegory of man's selfish interests at war with his selfless interests.

> Ah yes, not the prophet, not the enlightened one,
> not the terrible megalomaniac of metaphors, stealing heroic colts,
> no,
> within history, making history, expressing what flows, happens,
> and gravitates,
> against my symbols, lashing me, rending me,
> by virtue of Marxist truth, collectively, the dynamite of my being
> explodes.

In his admirable preface Mr. Fitts explains that the aim of the translators has been t produce as intelligible and literal translations as possible, and that the method chosen ha dictated the choice of poems, naturally, the genius of language being what it is. I would disagree with Mr. Fitts, however, that the result is not poetry. Perhaps in the method o translation lies an explanation of the pedestrian quality of some of the poems; yet many hav come through as good English verse for which no apologies are necessary.

ANGELINA PIETRANGELI:

FRANCES AVERY PLEAK: *The Poetry of Jorge Guillén,* including some translations. Princeton University Press.

Miss Pleak's book (inviting with its attractive binding and creamy paper, clear printing and wide margins) consists of three sections. The first, a discussion of the sources of the contemporary Cuban's work (limited to Góngora, Jiménez and Valéry) is an ineffectual struggle with subtle distinctions. The second is the best: a thoughtful, sensitive analysis of Guillén's verse. The third section, on Guillén and the critics, gives interesting biographical notes and surveys critical comment. These last two sections provide an excellent background for the illuminating essay by Americo Castro which introduces the book. Castro's analyses of several poems are exciting adventures in reading.

The translations concluding the book are, unfortunately, not accompanied by the originals. The "exquisite density" of Guillén has far more clarity than is to be found in these translations, which are, moreover, occasionally marred by careless errors and by unjustified changes in punctuation (despite a previous avowal, on page 69, that here "punctuation plays a vital role of its own in giving emphasis and force to the expression"). Always, and more unhappily, they suffer from the translator's curious misconception that a faithful prose translation means a word-for-word substitution of English symbols for foreign ones. It is a misconception which betrays the original text and fails to use to advantage the resources of the English language. The one doubtful justification for such inadequacy may lie in the fact the despairing reader will be led directly to the Spanish and thus to the enchantment of Guillén's *Cantico.*

HOWARD P. VINCENT:

T. K. WHIPPLE: *Study Out the Land.* Introduction by Edmund Wilson. University of California Press.

It might seem doubtful that several essays written over a sizeable span of years and published in such different periodicals as *The Yale Review, The New Republic,* and *The Argonaut* could possess a unity warranting a title other than "Essays." But so consistent and so whole was the late T. K. Whipple's attitude towards life that the collection fuses almost as though it had been planned at the writing of the first essay. The title is taken from the blunt question which Walt Whitman posed to all Americans: "Who are you indeed who would talk or sing to America? / Have you studied out the land, its idioms and men?" That is just what Whipple did—if this volume is adequate evidence. While other teachers of English were totally absorbed in such matters as the peculiarities of the dative in the Mercian dialect, or while the artists were vinously hatching their isms in the bistros of Paris, safe from the "commonness" and "vulgarity" of Kansas or Missouri, Whipple quietly concerned himself with the cultivation of his own garden, analyzing for himself, and now for us, his America and its West, his country's writers, its psychology. Whipple had another concern beyond mere nationalism. In attempting to settle the question, "What is the function of literature?" he came to a humanistic answer which he characteristically related to his sociological and psychological investigations. Through skilful editing we get intellectual counterpoint.

The first essay, "Machinery, Magic, and Art," cogently argues the thesis that "Art as well as science has grown out of the basic impulse which underlies magic [i.e., to supply energy, power, control]. But whereas science, at least applied science, has remained true to its first aim, the arts, in our world, have drifted away . . . In surrendering their practical usefulness, they have relinquished their chief excuse for being. And only, I venture to say, when they return to their first function, when they become again channels of power, will they regain their robust vitality and the wide acceptance and understanding which they have forfeited. For everyone craves more vital energy, more medicine or *wakanda,* and when artists supply it they will no longer have cause to complain of public indifference. The triumphs and services of sciences and engineering are not more momentous . . . in utilizing natural resources, than might be the triumphs and services of art in vitalizing human resources." In "The American Predicament" and "The American Land" he considers the national rootlessness and restlessness inherited from (a) the alienation from the old world and (b) the expansive psychology of the frontier—two among several reasons for our futilitarianism. Whipple analyzes in a nation what Thomas Wolfe, in *You Can't Go Home Again,* portrayed in the individual. "The Myth of the Old West" points out that "The story of the West offers better opportunities than either of those [the Civil War or Whaling], as it is more nearly a true national myth. What is needed is the interpretation of it by the mature feeling, thought, and imagination of gifted individuals. Certainly the artist would gain from this union of his individual spirit with the national spirit; and the nation would gain, because at

last it would have a fitly embodied image and symbol from which it could derive those values that belong to the myth of the heroic age."

Having suggested the sufficiency of the American land and people as the stuff of great literature, Whipple begins a second section with a sharp analysis of "Literature in the Doldrums." He repeats "that both the theory and the form must emerge from the material itself . . . A writer sufficiently possessed by an absorbed experience need only be true to it," and proceeds to a dissection of three typically American writers: Dos Passos (disintegration and frustration), Jack London (primitivism and violence), and Steinbeck (aloofness). The criticisms of these writers may seem oversimple, but they are, within the limitations of space, carefully supported.

From this point the essays gather new force and largeness in the emergence of some of the ideas of the primary essay. The most important article in the book, "Poetry and Morals," courageously dusts off the much-scorned thesis that art *is* moral, and the dust is swirled into the eyes of the aesthetes. The contradictions and inconsistencies of Wilde and Spingarn result in their being hoist with their own petard. "Literature as Action," the last essay of all, is a brilliantly clear statement of the implications emerging from all that precedes. It is an affirmation of faith in literature, and hence in man. Literature is something more than a pretty bauble—though it can be that. "Literature does act upon us, in a thousand ways. Among other things, it affirms values; writers make us care about things, feel about them, as they do . . . This heightening of vitality or increase of life accounts in a large measure for the delight and joy that art gives us. But the point I wish to stress is that literature not only gives us this augmented power, but, by the values it asserts, directs it." Granting this, he continues, when faced with the major conflict of our time, between economic individualism and collectivism, the citizen and teacher of literature—his place in the struggle quite obvious—will find strength in the classics, the literature which best conditions the whole man. So compact and so forceful is the essay, however, that my attempted restatement is misrepresentation. It should be read by every teacher of literature who, under the impact of the anti-humanistic forces rampant today, has begun to doubt the worth of his subject, his own personal place and value in man's bitter struggle.

ARTHUR J. CARR:

New Directions Number 7, 1942, edited by James Laughlin.

Readers of Mr. Laughlin's seventh anthology will probably agree with him that there is not visible "any very pronounced drift." Yet he has succeeded in accomplishing one of his aims: to print writing that "with its dual reverence for technique and imagination" offers a "corrective" to the "enormous sloppiness of thought and taste that breeds in popular writing today."

In the prose the dual reverence is the companion of a variety of dullnesses (which I shall not attempt to anatomize). The styles are distinct, conscious, controlled; imagination shows its muscles—especially in the abstractionist and surrealist exercises of Paul Goodman, Robert Clairmont, and John Nerber and in a newly translated fable of Kafka's. But even the look of many very "well written" pages is dull. One reads with respect—a dull reaction. The greatest liveliness is to be found in the experimental play of W. C. Williams and in Georg Mann's satire, *Blackout in the Cathedral,* with its parody pilgrimage of Anselm Polycarp Wischmeier from positivism to neo-Thomism, from the University of Illigo to a not wholly beatific martyrdom in a Franco fighter-plane. It is good clean ridicule, tough but not venonous. "When scholasticism succumbed to the greed of its enemies, only a heartache was left to grace the spot where once a great theology had placed a warm and throbbing heel on the neck of humanity." That's the key—of a not too raucous *scherzo.*

It may surprise some readers, and please others, to find the poetry superior to the prose. We are offered the well fashioned, compact statements of Richard Eberhart, definitions of attitude, with little comment, by Eve Merriam, and an uneven but impressive group of poems by Marcia Nardi, a writer introduced with perhaps superfluous unction by W. C. Williams.

Upon all the writing the war leaves no special, no easily-to-be-interpreted scar. Although themes of violence and disruption prevail, I can make out no coherent functions of acceptance, refusal, or compromise. John Hart's intense and Blakeian lyric, "Prayer," epitomizes the perplexities: the old moods, cynicisms, ideals and ideologies, the current jolts, the persistent confusions and rebellion. Only the editor himself suggests what terms the writers may make or be forced to accept in the future. The writers are not concerned, overtly, with reconstructions—nor, I must add, with panaceas or slogans.

It is a book of dissatisfactions which, not having a merely literary origin, are certain not to be magicked away by "new directions" of style and theme. It is to be read, as it was written, amid the catastrophes of the present. The fifty pages of "homage" to Ford Madox Ford (1875-1939) form a kind of sandbank from which to observe the flood. *New Directions* fairly shows the flux; it endorses no principles of anybody's new order. To say that the reader shares the writers' dissatisfactions is not to call the book unsatisfactory.